The sleepy Spouse of Christ alarm'd:

Or, a

WARNING

To beware of

DROWSINESS

When Christ Calls,

Lest he withdraw in a discontent.

BEING

The Sum of some SERMONS upon *Cant.* 5th, and the beginning.

By *J. B.* Minister of the Gospel.

Rev. 3. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Matth. 23. 37, 38, 39. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*

Psal. 95. 7, 8. *To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

Recommended in a Preface by M. *Nath. Vincent.*

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To Mrs. *J. D.* the Author wiſheth all increaſe of Grace and Peace.

Honoured Friend,

IT was at your requeſt, and the earneſt requeſt of ſome of your Friends, that I was induced to publiſh theſe following Sermons. The reaſon whereof I ſuppoſe to be, becauſe your heart was (in ſome meaſure) opened to, and affected with the voice of Chriſt in his Word, when you heard it. I muſt confeſs, the matter or ſubject herein treated of, is very ſweet and precious, and ſuch as may well warm the frozen heart of any, that hath the leaſt drachm of ſincere love, either of complacency in, or commiſeration to Chriſt. To ſee how ready Chriſt is to condeſcend to the requeſts of his Spouſe, how ſweetly, and with what melting and irreſiſtible Arguments, he wooes her; how rich and plentiful he is in the emanations of his Grace and Kindneſs towards her: And then on the other hand to conſider, how ſleightly ſhe looks upon him, how little account ſhe makes of him; and how ſhe makes him dance attendance at her

with many other circumſtances of her unkindneſs: and withal to conſider the danger and hazard which ſhe runs, by her unkind behaviour towards Chriſt: Theſe Conſiderations (which are the ſubject of the enſuing Diſcourſe) being ſeriouſly weighed by a Soul that hath any love for, or breathings after Chriſt (among the number of which, I hope, I may truely reckon you) cannot chooſe but in ſome meaſure awaken the ſleepy Soul, and warm the cold and frozen Affections. This effect I perceive the Word had upon you; for which you owe the thanks and praiſe to the Spirit of Grace, which accompanied the Word to your heart, and gave it entertainment there. For man ſpeaks only to the ear, it is God that ſpeaks to the heart: You having therefore taſted the ſweetneſs of this Word your ſelf, deſired the communication of it to others, who had not the opportunity (with you) to hear it; and in order thereunto, the publication of it. Your deſigne I muſt own to be good: for Grace (where it is in truth) is not only of a diffuſive nature (ſpreading it ſelf through the whole man) but alſo of a communicative nature; wiſhing that all by-ſtanders might likewiſe taſte that ſweetneſs, which it ſelf is much delighted with. Grace deſires not to eat its morſels alone, but if any Banquet be given in by Chriſt, or any refreſhment by his company, the Soul cries out to by-ſtanders.

by-ſtanders, O taſte and ſee how good the Lord is! He is altogether lovely. Come, *therefore*, and I will tell you what he hath done for my Soul. *But (though your deſigne be good, yet) the weakneſs and inſufficiency of the Author, might well have pleaded an excuſe. For it is pity that ſuch a ſweet and precious ſubject ſhould be rendred deſpicable, by being handed into the world by ſo weak, rude and unpoliſhed an inſtrument, as I muſt of neceſſity confeſs my ſelf to be. For I am ſenſible, that many times the Truths of Chriſt ſuffer in the world, through the weakneſs of the Inſtruments that hand them to us. However, yet (ſometimes) it pleaſeth God*, By the mouths of babes and ſucklings to perfect his own praiſe; *that the work may appear to be not of men, but of God. Leaving therefore the work in Gods hand (who is able to do what he pleaſeth with and by it) and waving the conſideration of mine own weakneſs, I condeſcend to your requeſt, and make bold* to caſt this my poor mite into Gods Treaſury: *Saying to you and to all courteous Readers, as Peter to the Cripple, Acts 3. 6.* Silver and Gold have I none; but ſuch as I have, give I unto you. *I hope the food is wholeſome, though it be but plainly and meanly dreſſed. And though it may fall into the hands of ſome, whoſe curious ſtomacks may loath ſuch plain and homely diet;*

yet

yet possibly it may fall into the hand of some poor creature, who is hungry, humble, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembles at Gods Word. *Some poor hungry Soul may (perhaps) here meet with meat, though there be little sawce to be had: And if any poor Soul shall reap benefit by my poor labours and endeavours (I hope) I shall bless God for owning such a worthless creature, in so glorious a work. And (if it do good) the less of the instrument, the more will there be of God seen in it. I beg of you therefore, and of all candid Readers, into whose hands this small Treatise may come, their and your serious perusal of it, with their Prayers to God for a blessing upon it: what you finde of humane weakness in it, pardon and pass it by: whatever you finde of God in it, minde it and apply it. And the very God of Heaven powerfully influence it with his blessed Spirit, that it may do your Souls good, and that you may readily open to Christ now, that he may open to, and own you, at Death and Judgment. Which is the humble and earnest Prayer of*

Yours,

In and for Christ my Lord and Master,

James Bradshaw.

TO THE READER.

Christian Reader,

THe *Spirit of Slumber* exceedingly prevails at this day; as great ſecurity is to be found in this Nation, as was in the old World and in *Sodom*, before the *one* was Drowned, and the *other* Burned. God hath uſed ſeveral ways and means to awaken us; but our Spiritual Lethargie proves a very ſtubborn Malady. 'Twere bad enough if onely profane perſons were faſt aſleep in Sin. 'Tis worſe that Profeſſors are ſo too. But 'tis worſt of all, that *the Wiſe Virgins ſlumber as well as the Fooliſh.* What may be the Iſſue of our carnal Security, we may tremble to think of. When men *ſay they ſhall have peace, though they walk on after the imagination of their evil Heart*, the Lord confutes their preſumption, by *threatning all the Curſes written in his*

his Book, and that he will blot out their names from under Heaven. Promising *safety* to themselves, is the forerunner of Sinners *sudden destruction.* 1 Thess. 5. 3.

I am perswaded that the designe of the worthy Author of this ensuing Treatise is to prevent that ruine which is likely to follow upon that drowsiness and security which does so generally prevail. And in wishing that he may accomplish his designe, is to wish well to the whole Nation. *If a word spoken in season be like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver,* there needs no enlarging in the commendation of this Treatise. The Lord make it as profitable as 'tis seasonable! This is the desire and prayer of

Thy Servant for Jesus sake,

Nathanael Vincent.

The sleepy Spouse of Christ alarm'd:

OR,

A Warning to beware of Drowsiness when Christ Calls, lest he withdraw in a discontent.

CANTICLES 5. 2, 3, 5, 6.

It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, &c.

THis Song, which is an excellent part of Divine Scripture, contains in it much sweet, Heavenly, and Divine matter, profitable for our Edification and Consolation. But the great difficulty lies in the right understanding of it, in order to the drawing out from thence that sweet and Heavenly matter, so profitable to our Souls edification. For the helping us to a right knowledge of the Divine matter herein contained, it is necessary to consider, 1. *The*

Nature. 2. The general Scope. 3. The Persons speaking and spoken of.

1. As touching the Nature of this Book, it is wholly an Allegory, or Figurative, discourse, under the mask of Similitudes and Resemblances; holding forth to us great, divine, and most excellent Mysteries. And therefore in the understanding of it, we must not acquiesce in the immediate literal Sense, I mean, in the immediate or Grammatical sense which the words bear; but must look through them to the mediate, literal, or spiritual Sense that is couched in them. For the literal Sense of the Scripture is, that Sense which the Holy Ghost immediately and primarily intends in that portion of Scripture, whether delivered in Proper, or Figurative Expressions. And therefore the Literal and Spiritual Sense are here one and the same.

2. As touching the general Scope and designe of this Book; it is to set forth the mutual Love, spiritual Union and Communion between Christ and his Church; and their mutual carriage and deportment towards each other in several conditions, and under various dispensations; brought in, and carried on by way of Dialogue and discourse between several persons.

3. The persons speaking and persons acting their

their parts in this Dialogue or Discourse, are principally three. First, The Bridegroom, by which we must understand the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. The Bride or Spouse, by which understand the Church, either in general or particular Believers. 3. The Daughters of *Sion*, and *Jerusalem*, &c. by which we may understand either young Converts, or visible Believers.

The persons spoken of, are, 1. The Bridegroom, which is *Christ*. 2. The Bride, the *Church*. 3. The Friends of the Bridegroom, which are the *Ministers* or *Messengers* of Christ. 4. The Virgins, or Daughters of *Jerusalem*, young *Candidates* in Religion, and *Professors* of Religion. 5. The Brides Mother, the *Church*, wherein young Converts are begotten, nourished, and brought up.

The particular knowledge of the Persons speaking and spoken of, or to, in every place, will give much light for the discovery and right understanding of the thing or matter that is spoken; and therefore this is necessary to be observed in every part of this Book.

The persons here speaking in this Chapter and discoursing of and with each other, are *Christ* and his *Spouse*. In the Text we have a rehearsal by the *Spouse* of *Christ*, his speech to her, and of her carriage and deportment towards him.

If you caſt your eye back to the laſt Verſe of the foregoing chapter, you ſhall find the *Spouſe* making her requeſt to *Chriſt* for the revival of her Graces, and the return of *Chriſt* into her ſoul. That *Chriſt* would prepare and make ready her Heart, by quickning, inlivening, and enlarging Grace, and putting it into a poſture fit for Exerciſe, for the entertainment of him; and being thus prepared for his entertainment, that he would pleaſe to come in and taſte of that Feaſt which himſelf had prepared. Hereupon in the firſt Verſe of this Chapter *Chriſt* makes anſwer to her requeſt, telling her that he was come, and had brought his Friends with him, to wit, his Miniſters, that they, as well as he, might be delighted with that Feaſt. For it is no ſmall refreſhment unto the Friends, or faithful Miniſters of *Chriſt*, to ſee and taſte of the flouriſhing Graces of the People or *Spouſe* of *Chriſt*. Yea, he invites her alſo to taſte of the ſweetneſs of his Grace in her ſelf, that ſhe might be refreſhed with what he had revived and refreſhed in her. But ſhe (poſſibly being weary with waiting ſo long and late for him, not expecting his company at that time of the night) was gone to bed, and fallen aſleep, as ſhe her ſelf confeſſeth, Verſe the 2. But as late as it was, *Chriſt* comes and knocks, and ſhe hears, and knew his voice, and gives

us an account what he ſaid to her. As ſhe had but now made her ſute and requeſt to him, deſiring him to come: ſo he being come, makes another kind and loving motion to her, and ſuch a one as was very reaſonable, and (one would have thought) would have been readily embraced. She had begged of him that he would come; and now being come, and finding her in bed, he begs of her that ſhe would open to him, and let him in. But alas poor *Spouſe!* as if ſhe had forgot her reſpect to her Husband, the benefit and deſireableneſs of his company, and her own requeſt ſo lately made, ſhe gives him a flat denial, couched under ſome complemental excuſes, Verſe 3. *I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?* She could wiſh to have *Chriſt*, but is too lazy to riſe out of her bed to open to him. She would have *Chriſt* and his Comforts, but would not be at the pains to perform any duty of obedience unto him, would not open to him by faith: but *Chriſt* having a more warm Heart and Affection for her than ſhe had for him, reſolves not ſo to be put off; and being reſolved to ſpeed in his requeſt, will not ſo let her alone; and therefore powerfully (yet ſweetly) makes an aſſault upon the Door of her Heart, ſo effectually moving upon her Af-

ſections, and awakening her Graces, that ſhe can no longer deny, but ariſeth to open to him, and by aſſiſting and coming to the door, finds a wonderful change and alteration in her ſelf, *V.* 4, 5. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I roſe up to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrhe, and my fingers with ſweet ſmelling myrrhe, upon the handles of the lock.* She no ſooner begins to act faith upon *Chriſt*, but ſhe found encouragement enough to let him in. If *Chriſt* had thus perfumed her Lock with but putting in his Finger by the hole of the Door, Oh what would his company be when himſelf came in! And therefore, without any more delay or excuſe, in all haſte ſhe opens to him, *v.* 6. But *Chriſt*, though he would not utterly forſake her and caſt her off, yet he would make her ſenſible of the affront which ſhe had offered him, and of her ungrateful carriage towards him; and therefore withdraws, and makes her who (but now) was ſo delicate and careful that ſhe could not put on her Coat, or come barefooted over the houſe-floor) to ſeek him in the ſtreets, and take many a wet and weary ſtep in the dark night, and that (queſtionleſs) with an aking Heart, having his perfumes ſo freſh in her Breaſt, and her own guilt ſo

freſh upon her Conſcience, before ſhe find him. This was the caſe between *Chriſt* and his *Spouſe* at this time.

I ſhall but in a word mention thoſe particulars in the Text, upon which I deſigne to ground the Doctrine, and ſo proceed to the Doctrine.

In the whole Conference or Relation I ſhall take notice of theſe things, upon which I ſhall ground the Doctrine.

1. The Churches Prayer, chap. 4. 16. *Awake O North-wind, and come thou South*, &c. She prays for the breathing Influences of the Spirit, whereby her Graces may be revived and made fit for action; and then deſires *Chriſt*'s company, when ſhe is fixed and prepared for him.

2. We have *Chriſt* his Anſwer to the Church her Prayer, chap. 5. 1. The *Spouſe* no ſooner calls, but *Chriſt* makes Anſwer; no ſooner invites, but *Chriſt* comes.

3. The poſture which he finds her in at his coming: gone to bed, and compoſing her ſelf to ſleep. Believers do ſometimes pray for that which they have no patience to wait for.

4. *Chriſt* his Call and Propoſal which he makes to the *Spouſe* at his coming; which is but very reaſonable, ſince his coming was at

her request, *v.* 2. *Open to me, my sister, &c. for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

5. We have the *Spouse* her unreasonable denial and excuses, *v.* 3. She litte considered how wet and weary Christ was, and manifested but poor respect to him, when she will rather suffer him to stand there, than she will be at the trouble to put on her Coat, or defile her Feet. Oh what difference is here between *Christ*'s love to us, and our love to him!

6. We may observe the effect of this refusal and unreasonable denial. Though *Christ* rouze up her Graces, and give her some taste of his excellency, which may make her unweariedly to seek him: yet he will make her smart for her lazyness and indifferency, and low value which she set by *Christ*. He will make her take abundantly more pains before she find him. She shall seek him with a fainting aking Heart, and in seeking take many a wet and weary step; feel a little of what he endured at the door, before she find him. *v.* 6.

From all these considerations in the Text, I gather this Doctrine:

That it is a dangerous thing, and may cost us dear, to be lazy and secure when Christ knocks and calls; especially when his coming and calling is in answer to our Prayers.

This

This truth is not onely the ſenſe and ſum of this Text, but we find the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaking the ſame thing for ſubſtance in other parts of Scripture. *Prov.* 1. 24, and following verſes. *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproofs:* Therefore, *I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh*, &c. Pſal. 81. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. *Hear, O my people —— There ſhall be no ſtrange God in thee —— I am the Lord thy God —— But my people would not hearken —— So I gave them up —— O that my people would have hearkned* — Luke 13. 34, 35. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not —— Wherefore your city is left to you deſolate ——* Rev. 3. 20. *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock: If any man open to me, I will come in unto him, and I will ſup with him, and he with me.*

In the further proſecution of this Doctrine, I ſhall (through Gods aſſiſtance) obſerve this method.

1. Speak ſomething by way of Explication.
2. Something by way of Confirmation.
3. Something by way of Application. In the Application of the Doctrine, I ſhall endeavour

to

to ſhew, 1. Where *Chriſt* knocks. 2. At whoſe door *Chriſt* knocks. 3. How, or with what he knocks. 4. For what end he knocks: Or what it is that *Chriſt* would have when he knocks. 5. What are the ſpecial times of his knocking.

I begin with the firſt of theſe, *Where it is that Chriſt knocks.*

To this I anſwer, That *Chriſt*'s Knocks and Calls are at the door of man's Heart. To have the Ear open to God's call ſignifies little, if the door of the Heart be ſhut, and *Chriſt* cannot get in there. We ſee in the Text the *Spouſe* (though partly aſleep) heard *Chriſt*'s Knock and Call well enough, and yet ſhe cauſed him to depart from her, becauſe ſhe did not open to him. Wiſdom cries, *Prov.* 23. 26. *My ſon, give me thine heart. Chriſt* will have the Heart open, or elſe he will not come in; and that for theſe reaſons. 1. Becauſe, as *Chriſt* is no diſſembler, but real in what he offers and gives: ſo he loves no diſſembling; but expects that the Soul ſhould be real and cordial with him. Now, to pretend to embrace *Chriſt*, and not to do it with all the Heart, is to mock him, and diſſemble with him. This God complains of, *Jer.* 3. 10. *And yet for all this her treacherous ſiſter* Judah *hath not turned to me with the whole heart, but feignedly, ſaith*

the

the Lord. This is no better than flattery or lying in God's account. *Pſal.* 78. 36, 37. They pretended *to return, and ſeek early after God. Nevertheleſs they flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue; for their heart was not right with him.* *Jeremiah* complains thus of the wicked, *Jer.* 12. 2. *Thou art near them in their lips, but far from their reins.* That Son was rejected, who ſaid, *I go Sir*, but went not. This diſſembling and complementing with God, is abominable to the heart-ſearching God: And therefore he requires that the Heart be opened unto him, and there it is that he knocks.

2. Becauſe the Heart is the chief part of *Chriſt* his purchaſe, and therefore he knocks there. It is true, *Chriſt* is the Redeemer of the Body: but had not that been an appurtenance to the more noble part, the *Soul*, *Chriſt* would never have paid ſo dear a price for it. But the inward man, the *Soul*, or *Heart*, was that which was chiefly in *Chriſt*'s eye, when he made his *Soul* an Offering for Sin. *Pſal.* 71. 23. *My lips ſhall greatly rejoyce — and my Soul which thou haſt redeemed.* The Soul is the Jewel which *Chriſt* hath purchaſed; and therefore though he ought to have the Box or Cabinet with it, yet the Cabinet without the Jewel will not give him content. It is the

Heart

Heart or Soul therefore that he calls for, when he knocks.

3. Because the Heart is the Royal Seat, or Throne, and *Christ* comes not to be a truckle-bed Guest, but to rule and reign in us: and and therefore if he have the Heart, which is the commanding faculty, the Will and Affections, he may by that command the whole man; but without this, it will be in vain, if not impossible, to keep possession of the other parts of the man. The Heart is the fountain, from whence the streams that run in every part of the man proceed; if this be not pure, the streams must needs be filthy: And therefore *Prov.* 4. 23. we are commanded to *Keep the Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life.* The Heart is always full, and is continually sending forth Legions of thoughts, words and actions, either good or bad: How should *Christ* keep the outward man quietly, if the heart be not for him? Our Saviour speaks it as an impossibility, *Mat.* 12. 34, 35. that *they being evil* should *speak good things*, and gives the reason of it, Because that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*: and therefore according as the heart is disposed and qualified, such are the thoughts, words and actions. The *good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things*;

things; *the evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart evil things*: How should the fruit be good, when the tree is bad? The heart then, if it be not for Christ, will dayly be sending forth such troops of filthy molesting enemies, that *Christ* shall have no quiet abode near it; and therefore he will either have the Royal Fort delivered and opened to him, or he will not come there. If the heart be filthy, the whole man is defiled with what issues from thence: and see what flouds of stinking filthiness issue from the heart, and defile the man, Mat. 15. 18, 19, 20. *Evil Thoughts*, *Murders*, *Adulteries*, *Fornications*, *Thefts*, *False witness*, & *Blasphemies*; And how then shall the sweet breath of *Christ* endure near such a sink of filthiness? if he may not come to the spring or rise of it to purge it, there will be no long stay for him.

4. *Christ* will have the Heart or none, because his chief suit and request is for our love, and this he cannot have without the Heart, because it is seated in the heart; and though it send its servants abroad, yet it self never stirs from thence: and therefore *Christ* cannot have this, unless he have the Heart. Such is *Christs* love towards his *Spouse*, that he earnestly desires to be married to her; and the Terms he proposeth, are Matriage-terms, where-

wherein Love is the chief and principal. And great reason he should have this, not only in regard of his great Love wherewith he hath loved us, and the fruits and effects of it; but also in regard we have nothing else to give him: nor can he expect any other thing with us that may be desireable. Portion we have none; not so much as Clothes to our back, or to cover our nakedness, nor Meat for our belly, nor penny of Money in our purse. Beauty and Comeliness we have none, till he have beautified us with his Comeliness. Wisdom and parts we have none, for by nature we are Fools. Providence or good Housewifery we have none, for we had a good portion left us, and we have wasted and spent it all. Great Friends and Allies we have none, that can do any thing for us, for we were cast out to the loathing of our persons, in the day wherein we were born, and none eye pitied us; and as for our descent, our father was an *Amorite*, and mother an *Hittite*, a cursed generation, as we read *Ezek.* 16. beginning. What have we then that may commend us to *Christ*, or that may in any sort please him, if he have not our Love? And surely, it is but reasonable that he should have this; nay, since he hath nothing else, he will have this, or not match with us.

5. *Christ*

5. *Christ* will have the heart opened where he comes, because the Feasts and Banquets which he hath prepared and brings with him, chiefly respect the heart: the outward man is little or nothing concerned in them, or advantaged by them, unless it be by consequence. *Christ* his Feasts are Spiritual, and therefore but little grateful to the flesh, or outward man. The word that *Christ* speaks is part of his Banquet or Feast, and *David* saith they are sweeter than Honey or the Honey-comb. But what Refreshment or Feast would these be to the body, or outward man, if the Heart take no notice of them, and be not affected with them? and therefore *Hos.* 2. 14. *Christ* would allure his *Spouse*, and take her into the Wilderness, and there would speak comfortably to her: or, speak to her Heart (as the word signifies.) Words yield but little comfort or refreshment, if they be not spoken to the Heart. *John* 6. *Christ* tells us he will give his Flesh and Blood to feed us, and this but after an imaginary way neither; for we must not really have his Body and Blood after a corporeal manner, but spiritually represented and adumbrated by a little broken Bread, and poured-forth Wine. If this Feast therefore extend to, or concern nothing more than the Body, it will prove but a poor hungry

Feast.

Feast: he findes it so, that goes away from th
Ordinance without finding and feeding upo
Christ by Faith. And therefore were not th
Banquet Spiritual, and such as immediatel
concerns the Heart, the Scripture would neve
call it a Feast of Marrow and Wine setled upo
the lees; nor would *David* say, *Psal.* 63. 5
that his Soul was *satisfied, as with marro
and fatness*, when he fed upon this. An
therefore *Christ* his Feasts being chiefly spiri
tual, and respecting the Heart, they woul
be lost, and signifie nothing, if the Heart wer
not opened to him: And therefore the plac
where *Christ* knocks is the door of the Heart
which he requires should be opened to him.

2. The next thing to be enquired into is
At whose door doth Christ knock?

To this I answer, That Christ knocks at e
very ones door, that lives under Gospel-Or
dinances and Dispensations. There is n
person living under Gospel-Ordinances, but a
one time or another *Christ* knocks at the doo
of his heart, requiring entrance and admissi
on. Thou that readest, or hearest this Word
whoever thou be, Male or Female, Bond o
Free, Young or Old, Rich or Poor, High o
Low, whatever order, rank, or degree thou
be of, in whatever condition or state thou be
at thy door it is that *Christ* by this word
knocks

knocks, saying, *Open to me*, &c. See the universality of *Christ*'s knock or call, *Rev. 3. 20. I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open to me, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Rev. 22. 17. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely.* Isai. 55. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Christ knocks not onely at the Hearts of his own people, as here of the *Spouse*, *Open my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:* But also at the doors of others, such as are unregenerate, and know him not. Only with this difference; at the doors of his own regenerate ones, he calls for the awakening and stirring up the grace which he hath bestowed upon them: but to such as are unregenerate, and yet strangers to him, he calls them to Faith and Repentance, and to come unto him, that they may live and finde rest for their Souls, *Matth. 11. 28, 29, 30.* To Believers he calls, to awaken their Graces that are already implanted in their Hearts: But to Unbelievers he calls, to awaken them out of their sleep in Sin and security.

And of these, there is not the meaneſt Soul nor the greateſt Sinner left out of his call: and if any man will but open to him, he will come in; though their Sins be as Scarlet, and crimſon, he will make them as Snow and Wool. *Iſai.* 1. 16, 17, *&c.*

3. The next enquiry is, *How, or with what Chriſt knocks and calls?*

And to this I anſwer, *Chriſt* doth not ordinarily knock and call by an immediate voice from Heaven, as he did upon *Saul*, Act. 9. but under the Goſpel God ordinarily calls ſome one or more of theſe ways.

1. Chriſt knocks or calls, ſometimes by his Providences. Chriſt many times ſends ſome remarkable Providence or other to awaken Sinners out of their ſleep in Sin, and to awaken the Graces of his People, when they are ſleepy and ſluggiſh: and theſe Providences they are of two ſorts: ſometimes ſuch as we call Mercies; (though all his Diſpenſations in this caſe are Mercies, and the fruits of his faithfulneſs) but by Mercies I mean ſuch things as are Joyous and deſirable for the preſent. He ſometimes loads his people with Bleſſings and Benefits. *Hoſ.* 11. 3, 4. And every Mercy in this kinde is an awakening and quickning ſpur unto duty. Therefore God complains, *Hoſea* 2. 8. that *they did*

not

not consider that he gave them corn, and wine, and oyl, wool and flax, silver and gold, which they should have served him withal: and because they did not, threatens to take them away. Therefore we finde this laid down as the ground of that God's Expostulation with his People, *Deut*, 32. 6, 9, 10, *&c.* The goodness of God should lead persons to Repentance; God expects it, and by this many times calls. Sometimes God calls by his Corrections and Judgements, striving by the smartness and severity of his Judgements, to awaken Sinners, that are rather hardned by Prosperity, and to affright them out of their sleep in sin, and to awaken his own people out of that sleep which they have lulled themselves into by Prosperity. Thus we read, *Job* 36. 8, 9, &c. when he lays persons in *Fetters* and *Irons* of *Affliction*, *Then he shews them their way and their transgression, wherein they have exceeded.* And of these two ways of knocking, usually Mercy and Goodness leads the way; and if that will not do, then Judgement, and the Rod follows after: *For God doth not willingly grieve and afflict the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. But *if need be, they must be in heavineſs through manifold tribulations and temptations*, 1 Pet. 1. 6. Thus God calls by his Providences.

2. Sometimes God calls by his Ordinances,

reading the Scriptures, and the Labours of his faithful Ministers: hearing the Word preached, and the like. God hath qualified and sent forth his Ministers and Messengers to call and hire Labourers into his Vineyard; to bid Guests to his Wedding-supper, *Matth.* 22. and the beginning. And this is their work which they are sent about, and is given them in charge, *Matth.* 28. 19, 20. *Go, teach all nations, baptizing – Teaching them to observe what I command you.* So *Acts* 26. 18. *Paul* is sent to the *Gentiles, To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Christ himself came and preached for this end, and his Doctrine or Sermon was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,* Matth. 4. 17. And *John* the Baptist came with this message, *Mark* 1. 4. Yea, the Apostle tells us that this is the work of every Minister, 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20. *--Hath committed to us the word of reconciliation; so then, we are Embassadors for Christ: as if God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* So that every Sermon that the faithful Ministers of Christ preach, is a call and knock from Christ to open unto him.

3. Sometimes Christ calls by the secret impulses of his Spirit, and convictions of our

And every godly Minister does his own duty — he is Christ's Vicar.

own Consciences. Thus we read *Acts* 2. 37. when they heard the Apostles Sermon, *They were pricked at their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* Here was an inward impulse of the Spirit upon their Consciences, accompanying the outward preaching of the Word. Thus God secretly opened the Heart of *Lydia* to attend to what was preached by *Paul*, Acts 16. 14. And thus the Jaylor was wrought upon by the Spirit of God, *Acts* 16. 29, 30, 31, *&c.* This secret impulse of the Spirit, and conviction of Conscience sinners many times have when they are going on in their sins, though they do not always give heed and hearken to it. And this many times the people of God have, when they begin to be lazy, drowzy, and to fall asleep in security: and therefore the Apostle bids us not to quench or grieve the Spirit of God, 1 *Thess.* 5. 19. *Ephes.* 4. 30. And indeed the two former ways of Christ his knocking and calling are ineffectual, unless they be accompanied with this last way of calling: For neither Ordinances nor Providences can awaken sinners, unless the Spirit of God work by them. And therefore we read *Job* 36. 8, 9, *&c.* that he first *binds them in Cords*, and then *opens their ears to discipline.*

4. The next thing to be enquired into, is, For what end Christ knocks and calls: or what it is which Christ would have when he knocks? And to this I answer,

In general, That the end or reason of Christs knocks and calls are various, according to the different state and conditions of those, at the doors of whose Heart he calls. But usually when he calls, he would have, or designes one or more of these ends or things.

1. To awaken sinners out of their deep sleep in sin and security. Sinners are by nature so fast asleep, in such a dead sleep of sin and security, that nothing less than the voice of the Son of God knocking and speaking at the door of their Hearts will awaken them: hence we read *John* 5. 25. That *the time is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.* Which must be meant not of a natural Death, or of the day of Resurrection, but of a Death in sin; because he saith, the time *now is.* And therefore saith the Apostle, *Eph.* 2. 1. *You hath he quickned*, i. e. by the powerful voice of his Spirit, *Who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Would you see what one of Christ's calls are in this case? read *Eph.* 5. 14. *Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.*

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This he ſpeaks not onely to the Ear by his Word, but to the Heart by his Spirit.

2. Chriſt his calls at the doors of our hearts many times deſigne Repentance. Repentance is a Goſpel-duty incumbent upon every perſon, *Acts* 17. 30. *But now commands all men every where to repent.* And for this end he ſends forth his Miniſters to preach the Doctrine of Repentance, to ſhew the neceſſity of Repentance, and that there is great reaſon or cauſe for Repentance; becauſe we have ſinned, and thereby departed from God, and cannot come to him again but by Repentance. It is called *The Doctrine of Repentance*, becauſe Repentance is properly a Goſpel-doctrine, a Doctrine that the Law preacheth not: for the Law, or Covenant of Works, admits of no Repentance; but upon our breach of the Law, immediately pronounceth a Curſe, *Gal.* 3. 10. *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.* But the Goſpel-covenant admits of, yea calls for Repentance, as the way and means to obtain Mercy: yea promiſeth Mercy and Pardon upon our Repentance, *Prov.* 28. 13. *He that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſin, ſhall find mercy.* Therefore the Goſpel tells us, that *Except we repent, we ſhall all likewiſe periſh*, Luke 13. 5. If perſons

ſons be in a ſtate of unregeneracy, then Chriſt knocks by his Word, and by his Providences, by his Mercies; and his buſineſs with them is, to ſhew that there is a neceſſity of their Repentance, and that they muſt either repent, or periſh everlaſtingly. If perſons be in a ſtate of regeneracy, and have by ſome temptation or other lapſed or fallen into Sin; or, it may be, have ſome Sin lodging in them, not yet truely diſcovered, and conſequently not particularly repented of: Then and in ſuch caſe Chriſt calls to renewed and enlarged acts of Repentance; for Repentance is a grace that concerns us all our lives long: And therefore the calls of Chriſt in this caſe may be ſuch as theſe: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

3. Chriſt calls to reconciliation with God. When Chriſt comes to the door of thine Heart, he comes as a mediator and peace-maker, to make peace between God and thy Soul, which are at variance with each other; and by reaſon of ſin have an utter enmity againſt each other. The cauſe of this enmity Chriſt hath taken away by his death upon the Croſs, and nailed it to his Croſs: The cauſe being removed, he comes and calls to intreat that the enmity it ſelf may be taken away, and we would be *reconciled unto God*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20.

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Though there be little reaſon for it, yet man is hard to be wooed and perſwaded to caſt out of his heart the enmity that is lodged there againſt God and his ways. And therefore Chriſt is forced to knock and call again and again, before we will (in this caſe) be perſwaded to yield to his ſuit.

4. Chriſt calls for a cloſure with himſelf by Faith, as the onely way and means to obtain peace, and reconcilation with God. We by our Sins are indebted to God, more than ever we are able to pay: are therefore in danger to be arreſted by Divine Juſtice, and caſt into priſon, where we may lie and rot, to all eternity. Jeſus Chriſt ſeeing us in this miſery and diſtreſs, comes and calls at the door of our hearts, offers to be our Surety to pay every farthing of our debt for us; and that upon this condition only, that he may have our full and free conſent to do this for us; and that we will accept of with thankfulneſs what kindneſs he ſhews herein, and rely upon him for the perfecting of this work for us; and where-ever Juſtice ſhall lay any charge or accuſation againſt us, we will by Faith confidently and ſtedfaſtly plead his Satisfaction for our Diſcharge. This is all that he requires from us; and upon this condition only, promiſeth to pay our Debt, reconcile us to God,

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free us from imprisonment, and seal us an absolute and full discharge, that shall for ever stand good to all intents and purposes. And therefore Christ his calls in this case are such as these, Matth. 11. 28. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Isai. 55. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsts, come unto the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come and buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Rev. 22. 17. *Let him that is a thirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely:* and he assures us, *John* 1. 12. that *As many as receive him* (upon these terms) *to them he will give power to become the sons of God: to them that* thus *believe on his Name.* And surely one would think this call is worthy to be embraced, with all readiness of heart and thankfulness.

5. Christ calls to sincere and hearty obedience to his commands, and subjection to his revealed Will and Law: he calls to *take his yoke upon us, and learn of him*, Mat. 11. 29. This call is like unto that of *Boaz* to his Kinsman, *Ruth* 4. Buy *Naomi*'s inheritance: but know also that thou must buy it of *Ruth*; i. e. buy the inheritance, but thou must take her to be thy wife also, to raise up seed to thy kinsman that is dead. So saith our Saviour, Come,

Come, and take the inheritance that I have purchased for thee, and thou art freely welcome to it; but know, that in the day wherein thou doſt this, thou muſt alſo eſpouſe me to be thy Lord and Husband, and muſt ſolemnly engage to behave thy ſelf as a loyal, faithful and obedient wife to me; thou muſt take me wholly, as I am, onely, abſolutely and everlaſtingly, not only for a Prieſt to make atonement for thy Sins, and to ſanctifie and offer thy gifts to the Father; but as a Prophet, to teach thee ſuch Laws, Statutes and Judgments, as are fit and requiſite for thee to obſerve: and as a King, to rule and govern thee by my Law: Thy heart muſt be my Throne, and there muſt I ſit, and exerciſe my Authority, and have thy whole man at command. This Chriſt calls for: but alas! too many that (like *Boaz* his Kinſman) have a mind of the benefit and inheritance, yet here turn their backs, and will rather let the inheritance go to another, than they will take Chriſt with it: Many will have Chriſt his Crown, but few will take up his Croſs; and therefore Chriſt his calls are but ſlowly hearkned to in this reſpect.

6. Chriſt calls ſometimes to awaken and excite his Spouſe, when ſhe is dull and ſluggiſh in her work: ſometimes the hearts of

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Gods own people grow lazy and sluggish, either laying aside their spiritual work, or performing it lazily. If they pray, they pray heartlesly and carelesly, as if they mattered not whether they sped or not. If they read or hear, they do it in too formal and customary a manner, not studying to profit thereby. If they come to the Lords Table, they come not with that appetite, and enlarged desire and expectation that they should; though indeed their wants are many and great, yet if God should put the same question to them, that he did to *Elijah*, *What dost thou here Elijah?* it would be hard for them to give a clear and particular answer, or a good account of their being there. They have Sins enough to repent of, but yet the sight of Christ bleeding and dying doth but little move or affect them: They can look upon him whom they have pierced, and yet mourn but little over him; they can behold what Christ hath done and suffered, out of pure love to them, and yet have little stirrings of Joy and Thankfulness in their hearts. And as for their spiritual watch, they let that fall, though in their enemies country; and hereby they give advantage and opportunity to their enemy to tempt them, and take them in his net. Therefore that careful and faithful Captain of

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our Salvation, seeing in what danger we are, not only in regard of our enemies watchfulness, but in regard of our lazy and sluggish posture, which indispoſeth us for our work, and gives advantage to our adversary; he therefore calls upon us to awaken us, and quicken us to our watch, and to our work: to our watch, lest our enemy come and take us napping; and to our work, left the night come before our work be perfected. It is a manifeſt token of Christ his care and faithfulneſs, thus to knock and call by awakening Ordinances or Providences, when thus he finds us enclined to sloath, or sluggiſhneſs: and yet many times he is forced to call aloud before he can make us hear.

7. Christ calls to open to him, and take part with him of that rich feaſt, or banquet, which he hath prepared and brings with him. Believers knowing their abſolute dependance upon Christ for continual supply of grace and comfort, they make their request to Christ, that he would come and make a feaſt in their Souls; that he would fill their hearts with food and gladneſs; that his comforts may delight their heart, whatever other thoughts may trouble and cumber them: and hereupon Christ comes and knocks for opening and entertainment, saying, (as in the Text) *Open to me*,

me, my Sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: and promising, as Rev. 3. 20. *If any man will open to me, I will come in, and will sup with him, and he shall sup with me.* Christ would not loose his feast when he hath prepared it, nor doth he love *to eat his morsels alone*; but desires the company of his Spouse, for whom he hath prepared them; and therefore calls. This was the case in the Text. The Spouse, *vers.* 16. of the foregoing Chapter, had prayed for the revival of Grace in her heart, that she might be prepared to receive and entertain Christ; and being so fixed, begs his company. This request is granted, for Christ according to her request comes, and desires to have the door opened to him: when Christ comes with loads of comfort, he many times findes the door of the heart fast shut against him, long knocks and calls before he gain admission. The Promises and Comforts of Christ stand many times long at the doors of our hearts before we open to, and receive them by faith; and many an excuse and put-off will many a poor soul make against it self, before it will be perswaded to receive the promises for its own comfort; yea sometimes so compliment it, and plead excuses, till Christ in an anger withdraw, and make the Soul long, and with an aking heart to seek Christ in the promises,

before

before she find him. And this (I conceive) is not the least part of the Holy Ghosts design to discover in this Text.

And thus have I shewed you some of those things which Christ would have when he knocks and calls. The last thing in the Explication of the Doctrine, is to shew what are the special times of Christ his knocking and calling.

To this I answer in general, That there is no Dispensation of God that he exerciseth towards us, but it hath something of a call from God in it. Every Ordinance of God, is a call from God, and comes with some Message unto us. Messengers are not sent, but upon some message or errand. God's Ministers are his Messengers, sent unto us, with some word of Reproof, Instruction, Counsel, or Comfort. And therefore the Scriptures are said to be *Profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, and Instruction in righteousness*, 2 Tim. 13. 16. And it is God's word that his Messengers bring, and therefore their message is to be heeded, because it is a call or message from God. Every secret impulse of the Spirit, check, and conviction of thy Conscience, is a call from God, ought to be listened and hearkned to; for Conscience is God's Deputy or Vice-gerent in the soul. Every Providence

dence that befals thee, whether Mercy bestowed upon thee, or Affliction, is a Messenger sent from God, and hath something of a call in it, something that God would have thee to learn by it. Yea, even those common providences, whether of good or evil, that befal thee in common with others, they come with some particular message to thee. A packet of Letters may be brought to a Town or place by one common Post or Carrier, but every ones Letter in particular comes about his own special business, though it come by the hand of the common Carrier. So in common Afflictions or Judgements, though they come in a common way, and by a common hand, either Humane or Divine, or in a common way of Providence; yet they come upon a particular errand, and about particular business, to the particular persons to whom they are sent. If they come to thee, know therefore that they have some particular message to thee from Heaven; and therefore labour to understand the Voice, and learn the Lesson. But though there be something of a call from God in every passage of God's carriage towards us, yet there are some special times wherein God's calls are much more remarkable: and it would be of dangerous consequence to slight such calls, or let slip such opportunities.

ties. And they are such times as these.

1. Christ his knocks and calls are very remarkable under powerful Ordinances, accompanied with secret strivings of the Spirit, and convictions of our own Consciences. God qualifies and sends forth his Ministers to preach the Gospel unto those to whom he sends them, and hath promised to be *with them always, even to the end of the world*, Matth. 28. 19, 20. It is his work they are about, and they must have his assistance and direction in the Work. He must put words into their Mouths, such as may accomplish the end and errand for which he sends them to such persons or people. And hence it is, that the faithful Ministers and Servants of Christ, are not onely diversly gifted and qualified for their work; but they find the Spirit of God variously directing, assisting, restraining, or enlarging, according as God is pleased to make use of them, and call them forth upon some particular work and designe. There is scarce a faithful Minister of Christ but may observe this in himself by frequent experience, both in his private Studies, and publick Exercises. Now when God doth by his Spirit in a more than ordinary manner raise, enlarge, and direct his Servants in their studies; warming the Word upon their Hearts; and likewise

inliven, and enlarge, and warm them in their publick work, and at the same time the Spirit of God is busie at work, striving with the people to whom this Message is sent, by secret impulses of his Spirit, and convictions of their Consciences: doubtless this is a remarkable call from Christ, and it would be of dangerous consequence to let slip such opportunities, to stifle such Convictions, and to quench such motions of the Spirit. An eminent instance we have of this, *Acts* 18. where we have *Paul* at *Corinth*, inwardly *pressed in his Spirit*, v. 5. and therefore warmed in his work: and the same Spirit was also busie at work in the Hearts of his hearers; for *many believed*, v. 8. God encourageth him, and bids him not fear, but go on boldly with his work, and he will be with him, and defend him: And the reason was, because God had *much people in that City*, v. 9, 10. This was a remarkable time of Christ his calling: and the *Jews* opposing the Apostle, and rejecting this call, proved of dreadful consequence to them, *v.* 6. for the Apostle left them, and preached to the *Gentiles*. When Christ by his Spirit really warms the Heart of the Minister in his work, and withal sends his Spirit to open thine Ears to attend, to enlighten thy Understanding to apprehend, to convince thy

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judgment of the truth of what is ſpoken, and to awake thy Conſcience, and make thy Bowels to ſtir within thee, as here he did the Spouſe, *Cant.* 5. 4, 5. this is a ſpecial call from Chriſt; and take heed how thou reſiſteſt it, or letteſt it ſlip.

2. Chriſt his Knocks and Calls are eminent, under ſpecial and remarkable Providences. The more eminent and remarkable God's Providences are towards them, the more loud and conſiderable are his calls upon thee. As for inſtance,

1. Under viſible danger of Chriſt his removal or withdrawing. If Chriſt ſhew ſigns and tokens of removing, it is to correct our former negligence, and to quicken us to lay faſter hold upon him. Thus in this Chapter, whereof the Text is part, the Spouſe did but too much ſlight Chriſt, in that ſhe was ſo lazy that ſhe would not ariſe to let him in; and therefore he withdrew, and made her feel him ſorrowing, with an aking Heart, and guilty ſelf-condemning conſcience, long before ſhe could finde him. Upon this account it is that Chriſt's departure from a perſon or people is many times gradual. He doth not depart on a ſudden, but by ſteps and degrees; that every ſtep may be a motive to lay hold upon Chriſt before he be quite gone. Thus

we find he departed from the Temple of old, as is evident in *Ezekiel's* vision, *chapter* 10. 11. The glory of God first removed to the door of the house, from thence to the Mountain, and then quite away. If we have any business with God, it is high time to improve our present oportunity, when God tells us by signes and tokens that he is removing, and ready to be gone. There is a wo immediately falls upon that person or people from whom God departs, when he is gone, *Hosea* 9. 12. *Wo unto them when I depart from them.* And therefore the signes of God's departure must needs be strong alarms to cause us speedily to lay hold upon God before he depart. Therefore saith the Prophet, *Isai.* 55. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is neer.*

2. When God hath for some time withdrawn himself, and afterward for some little space hath returned again, and manifested his presence or nearness: this is a loud call to improve our time, and while it is called to day, to hearken, and not harden our hearts. We read in the parable of the barren Fig-tree *Luke* 13. 6, *&c.* that when the owner had come several years expecting fruit, and found none, he commands that the Tree be *cut down*, because it but *cumbred the ground*: but

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at the requeſt and interceſſion of his Servant he ſpares it *one year longer*, and takes more pains with it that year than he had done of other years before; and if then it bear not fruit, it muſt be cut down without remedy. If after our many years barrenneſs in God's Orchard, and his threatning to cut us down, he takes more than ordinary pains with us, by his Word, Meſſengers, and Spirit, ſeeming more eminently and viſibly to return to us for ſome ſpace, to dig about us, and dung us: this is a loud call from him to improve the preſent opportunity, leſt he cut us down, and there be no ſervant to ſtand in the gap, or ſpeak a word for us. God's Miniſters are his Husbandmen; and if God threaten to cut down any Tree, they cry out, Lord ſpare it a little longer, let us take a little more paine with it; and if then it will not be fruitful, we will hold our peace: and if hereupon God do for ſome time ſpare, and yet no fruit be brought forth, that Tree will be in great danger to be curſed, and devoted to the fire. If once God ſay to his Miniſters as once he did to *Jeremy*, Jer. 7. 16. *Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up prayer nor cry, for I will not hear thee*; ſuch people muſt needs be in a ſad condition: and therefore if our time be but a time of probation, it is dangerous to let

it ſlip; leſt God ſwear in his wrath, that we ſhall not enter into his reſt. We finde that good and publick-ſpirited man, *Ezra*, chap. 9. v. 8, &c. ſadly trembling and aſtoniſhed at ſuch a thing as this: God had puniſhed his people by a ſeventy years Captivity for their ſins: and now for a little time grace had been ſhewed to them from the Lord, to give them a nail in his Sanctuary, and ſome tokens of his favour, and viſible preſence; but now they begin to fall to their old courſe of ſinning, and miſ-improve this day of grace: this makes *Ezra* to tremble, and ſit down aſtoniſhed. And ſee what he ſaith in his Prayer to God, verſ. 13. *If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, ſeeing that thou our God haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch deliverance as this: ſhould we again break thy commandments —— Wouldſt not thou be angry with us, until thou hadſt deſtroyed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* Clearly intimating, how dangerous a thing it is, to ſhut our ear againſt ſuch a call as this is.

3. Chriſts Call is eminent under great mercies ſpiritual or temporal largely beſtowed upon us. The more largely God's hand is opened to thee in Bounties, the more loud is his Knock and Call to thee to open to him: the

the Pſalmiſt makes this a ſtrong argument to his ſoul to return to his God, *Pſal.* 116. 7. *Return unto thy reſt* (*i. e.* unto thy God, for God is the only true and perfect reſt of the Soul) *O my ſoul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* And if in this caſe thou ſhut him out, or turn a deaf ear to his call, the greater will be thy ſin: we finde therefore the Spirit of God often aggravating the ſins of men from this conſideration, as in the caſe of *David*, 2 *Samuel* 12. when he had ſinned in the matter of *Uriah*, God ſends *Nathan* to him, who thus ſpeaks to him from the Lord, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. *I anointed thee king over Iſrael: and I delivered thee from the hand of* Saul: *I gave thee thy maſters houſe, and thy maſters wives into thy boſome, and gave thee the houſe of Iſrael and of Judah: And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee ſuch and ſuch things: wherefore then haſt thou deſpiſed the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his ſight?* —— This made *David*'s ſin wonderfully great; and ſo is it a moſt ſad aggravation of any mans ſin: See how God pleads with his Church, *Deut.* 32. upon this account, *Do you thus requite the Lord?* Why, what had God done for them? See *verſ.* 9, &c. he had *choſe them for his portion*: His Providence had been wonderful about them, his Preſence had been

wonderfully with them, and his Goodneſs had been wonderful towards them; and that therefore they ſhould grow fat and kick, was an heinous and intolerable affront, and would be dreadful in the iſſue, and therefore wiſheth *that they would be wiſe to conſider their later end*: let us therefore think of this, whom God hath ſo (every way) loaded with bleſſings.

4. Chriſts calls are remarkable, when his judgments are terrible; when the terribleneſs of Gods Judgments do manifeſt the heat of Gods wrath, then it is high time to know *the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it.* We read *Amos* 4. God threatens to *draw them forth with fiſh-hooks*, and caſt them out of their own land, becauſe of their incorrigibleneſs under his Judgments: he had ſo and ſo puniſhed them for their ſins, and yet they had not returned to the Lord, and therefore he would do thus with them, *verſ.* 12. And what follows? (mark) *And becauſe I will do thus unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Iſrael.* This was a loud call, without any more delays to prepare to meet God. The ſame Prophet puts this queſtion in the Negative, which the more ſtrongly affirms, *Amos* 3. 6. *Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City, and the people not be afraid?* When Gods Judgments ſound as a Trumpet of an Enemy that hath taken

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the City, it is high time for the people to tremble.

5. When the meaning of Gods dealings with us is plainly and legibly written in the forehead of Gods dispensations towards us, the more loud and intelligible is his call. When the finger of God in his Providences plainly points at our carriages, easie to be read and understood, this makes the call more clear, and us the more inexcusable if we take not notice of it. Sometimes a man may plainly read his sin that God smites at, in his punishment: as *David* might read his sin of Adultery and Murder, in *Absalom*'s Rebellion, and lying with his Concubines. Sometimes Judgments put such a stop to us in our sin, and take away the very occasion of our sins, or the things whereby we sin, that we may plainly see God correcting such a sin in us. Sometimes again, the circumstances of the puishment clearly point at the cause of them, as here in the Text. Christ his immediate departure, after the Spouse her complemental excuse and refusal to open to him, did most clearly point out her sin to her, and (no question) was a most bitter and biting sting upon her Conscience. Sometimes there comes secret convictions and intimations of the cause of Gods cotroversie, along with the affliction. God whispers us in the

the ear, and tells us that such a lash and scourge is for such a fault; and when these things fall out thus, they are loud calls from Christ to hearken to Instruction, and to bow our ear to Discipline. That saying of *Elihu* is very considerable for this purpose, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10, 11. *If they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction: Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgression, that they have exceeded. He openeth their ear to discipline, and commandeth them to depart from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, then they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and shall dye without knowledge.* And therefore it must needs be of dangerous consequence, to turn the deaf ear to such a loud call as this is. Thus remarkable Providences are a loud call from Christ to open to him.

3. Christ his calls are remarkable, when he comes upon our calling and invitation; when we from a sense of his absence have earnestly begged for his coming, and he in answer to our prayers doth come, and stands knocking at the doors of our hearts for admission and entertainment; this call is very loud, and our refusal to open, would be most unworthy. This is the very case in the Text, and therefore

fore I need not multiply Texts or Instances about it, for the case is plain enough here. The Spouse had prayed that Christ would come into the garden of her heart; Christ makes no delay, but quickly comes, and might reasonably expect to find ready admission, being so earnestly invited; but contrary to his expectation, he finds her in bed, the door shut, and she too lazy to arise to open to him; and therefore he withdraws in a discontent, as well he might. If therefore upon our earnest prayer Christ come and knock at the door of our hearts, either by his Ordinances or Providences, let us not stand debating whether we shall let him in or not, whatever posture we be in, though naked in our bed: for this is a special time of his coming, and will be unkindly taken, if he finde not admission according to his invitation.

4. When Christ his calls are accompanied with a great deal of earnestness and importunity. When Christ is in so very good earnest, that he woes and intreats, and will take no denial; this is a loud, because an earnest call, and argues that he is come very nigh, even to the very door. Therefore the Prophet adviseth by all means to close with such an opportunity as this, *Isai.* 55. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while*

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he is neer. This was the case of the Spouse in the Text. Christ was come to her door, and not onely stood there knocking, but by all the friendly compellations imaginable, endeavours to perswade her to let him in: *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.* And when this will not do, he comes near to the door, and puts in his finger by the hole of the door, as though he would make a forcible entry; intimating his earnest desire to have admission: and therefore it was unkindly done of her to keep him out, and cost her dear before he did come in. And so it may be with thee.

5. When Christ his Locks are wet with the dews of the night, then are his calls earnest and importunate, and it will be of dangerous consequence to keep him out. This is the argument which Christ makes use of in the Text, *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* Many things may be included in this argument, and all of force to perswade her to let him in; and making the argument more strong and forcible, make the call to be so much the louder, and the denial the more unreasonable. The words may be taken in a good sense: *My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

i. e. I come full fraught with all manner of Bleſſings and Benefits, that may tend to the chearing, refreſhing, and fructifying of thy ſpiritual man. There is nothing wanting in me to make thee perfectly and every way happy; onely *open to me*, and let me in: and then thou ſhalt be made partaker of all that is mine, and all that is in me. What is not wanting in me, ſhall not be wanting to thee, onely *open to me* by Faith, and let me in. And the truth is, all our emptineſs and penury ariſeth not from any want or defect in Jeſus Chriſt, *in him all fulneſs dwels*; but from our ſelves, becauſe we open not to him. And thus underſtood, they are an anſwer to the Spouſe her prayer, *Chapter* 4. 16. *Awake, O north wind, and come thou ſouth, and breath upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out.* She prays for the breathings of the Spirit, whereby her Graces might be revived, and made more active, and odoriferous. And to this Chriſt anſwers, that the onely way to obtain this in the extent and fulneſs of it, is to open to him by Faith, and let him into the Heart; and if ſhe will do ſo, he aſſures her that he brings all fulneſs of grace and bleſſings with him, his very head and locks are filled with them; and ſurely this is a moſt full and convincing argument, being

being applied as an answer to her prayer, and might well have the force of a loud call in her ears, sufficient to raise her, though laid down to take her ease. But the words may also be taken in a bad sense, importing the misery and hardship which Christ had undergone in coming to her in so dark and wet a night, and that still he did endure by standing out of doors in the wet, and dark, and cold. As if Christ had said, O my dearest Spouse! thou, by thy prayer, which so lately thou didst send to me, didst importune my company and help; and out of that true affection which I have for thee, and commiseration of thy condition, I have undertaken this long and tedious Journey, wherein I am benighted; the way hath been very foul, (for I have trodden the Winepress of God's wrath alone, have endured much persecution in my own person, and the persons of my Ministers, and much contradiction of sinners against my self; it hath cost me my dearest hearts blood to make my way to thee) and the weather hath been very wet, stormy, and tempestuous, so that I am wet to the very skin, not a dry hair upon my head, and the night hath been and is very dark, so dark, that it made me cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and now I am come, I stand at thy door in this

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miſerable wet and weary condition, deſiring entrance and admiſſion: Therefore open to me; and though thou be in thy warm bed, and at eaſe, yet conſider what a ſad condition I am in, and how bad and dangerous it is for my health to ſtand here in this condition; and do not ſo far forget thy relation to me, thy late requeſt, the pains and hardſhip which I have endured, and do endure, and the reciprocal Affection which thou oughteſt to bear unto me, as to ſuffer me to ſtand here out of doors, but ariſe quickly and open to me. If thou haſt any pity or commiſeration in thine heart, ſhew it now to me thy beloved Husband. And what could be ſaid more, to make the argument preſſing and cogent? and therefore muſt needs have the force of a loud, a powerful, and irreſiſtible call.

And thus I have done with the Explication; and now follows the proof and confirmation of the Doctrine; That to be lazy and ſecure, when Chriſt calls and knocks, may be of very dangerous conſequence; eſpecially when his coming and calling is in anſwer to our Prayers, as you ſee here it was in the Text. The truth of which will manifeſtly appear, from theſe following Conſiderations.

1. Let us conſider the greatneſs of our ingratitude and unkindneſs which hereby we mani-

manifeſt: nay, I may ſay, not onely unkind-
neſs and unthankfulneſs, but we hereby mani-
feſt wonderful hypocriſie and diſſimulation.
We importune and intreat Chriſt to come into
our Souls; and (if our words were to be taken
in prayer) we ſhew our ſelves to be very ear-
neſtly deſirous of his company, and that we
ſtand in great need of his help, and therefore
will take no denial, but intreat again and
again. At laſt Chriſt yields, conſents, and
(laying aſide all other buſineſs) comes, little
queſtioning but to finde us in a readineſs to
receive him; or however, willing to open
to him when he knocks and calls, in regard
we have ſo earneſtly invited him. Therefore
now at his coming to finde the doors ſhut,
we ſo careleſs of his company as not to watch
for him one hour; and when he knocks and
calls, for us to anſwer, *I have put off my coats,*
how ſhall I put them on? I have waſhed my feet,
how ſhall I defile them? To make thus light of
his pains and coming, what greater unkind-
neſs, or manifeſt token of complementing
diſſimulation and hypocriſie can be ſhewed?
Well may Chriſt ſay, O Spouſe! though thy
invitations ſeemed to be real, yet by this car-
riage I ſee, and plainly perceive the falſneſs
and treachery of thy diſſembling heart; for
inſtead of dealing plainly and faithfully with
me,

me, thou haſt but mocked me; and how canſt thou then ſay, that thou loveſt me? Well may Chriſt then take this ingratitude and diſſimulation unkindly from her, and take occaſion hereupon to depart. If any of you ſhould invite a friend to your houſe, and according to your earneſt invitation your friend comes, but at his coming you ſhut the doors againſt him; and though you be within, yet you refuſe to open to him, may he not well take this piece of ingratitude and mockery unkindly at your hands, and look upon it as an high affront put upon him, and therefore depart in a rage, and reſolve to miſs your door the next time he comes that way? But if a Wife ſhould deal thus with her Husband, would not this manifeſt much diſſimulation and unkindneſs? And may not he well take this as an high affront, to be thus ſlightly looked upon by his Wife? Such is the caſe between Chriſt and his Spouſe, and therefore no wonder though he depart in a diſcontent, when thus affronted, and treacherouſly dealt with. We finde it reckoned among the Sufferings of Chriſt in his ſtate of Humiliation, *Iſai.* 53. 2, 3. that he ſhould be ſlightly eſteemed and accounted of among men. —— *There is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men.* —— *We hid our faces, as it were,*

 from

from him; *He was despised, and we esteem*
him not. So John 1. 11. *He came to his own,*
and his own received him not. Thus to be
spised and mocked, and that by his own, t
goes near his heart, and may well put h
into a rage against me. This affront wo
far more easily have been born, had it be
from an enemy; but from a friend, and
near a relation, one that had given him so f
an invitation, this cuts and wounds to t
very heart. See what *David* (personati
Christ in the treachery of *Judas*) speal
Psal. 55. 12, &c. *It was not an enemy that r*
proached me, then I could have born it. --- B
it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, a
mine acquaintance: this so provokes, that
saith, vers. 15. *Let death seize on them, a*
let them go down quick into hell, for wickedn
is among them. Yea, this struck sad upon Chri
Spirit, *Psal.* 41. 9. *Yea, mine own famili*
friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of
bread, hath lift up his heel against me. Su
affronts as these cut deep; they wound to t
very heart: and therefore no wonder if t
effects and consequences which follow he
upon, be sad and dreadful to the soul.

2. Consider the great damage which o
Souls sustain by keeping out the Lord Jes
Christ. If we shut him out, he may with
draw

laws: nay, it is the next way to provoke him to withdraw, and how shall we then live with him? We read *John* 15. 5. *Without me*, saith Jesus Christ, *ye can do nothing*; neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to your selves. And therefore what a miserable condition are we left in, if Christ depart? Therefore saith God, *Hos.* 9. 12. *Woe also unto them when I depart from them.* And assure thy self, that thou must not take a more effectual course to cause him to withdraw, than to shut him out when he comes at thine invitation. Christ may withdraw, yea, and so withdraw as never to return again, or call at thy door more, *Psal.* 81. 11, 12. *My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts lust, and they walked in their own counsels.* God knocked many years at *Israel's* door, but when no admission would be had; then *He sware in his wrath, that they should never enter into his rest.* Ps. 95. 10, 11. See that threatning against Ephraim, than which there could not be a greater, *Hos.* 4. 17. Ephraim *is joyned to Idols, let him alone.* As if God had said, There are no hopes of reclaiming him; I have called often at his door, but to little purpose: therefore I will concern my self no more about him, I will call no more at his door. Read

with trembling. Ezek. 24. 23. 14. v. Prov. 1. 24, &c.

Sometimes though God may at last return and be reconciled, and call again, yet it may be long first, and many a weary step may he cause thee to take in seeking of him before thou find him. God threatens this, Hos. 5. 15. *I will go and return to my place, and hide my self, till they seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* And we read in the Text that Christ did deal thus with his Spouse. When she arose to open to her beloved, he had withdrawn himself, and was gone. Christ had heard and answered her at her first call, but since she had dealt so deceitfully and disingenuously with him, she should now call and call again before he gave her any answer, she should seek and seek him sorrowing before she should finde him. She was but now so lazy, careful, and delicate, that she could not abide to be at so much pains as to put on her Coat having put it off, could not endure so much hardship as to tread upon the floor with her naked foot, lest she should defile it. But if Christ be so little more set by, her love to Christ shall be further tried; she shall take a longer journey, and not complain so much of the foulness of the way neither before she finde him. If it be so tedious a Journey to cross

cross the house-floor; Christ will see whether she will take a journey through the streets, and high-ways, in as dark and foul way and weather as he hath come, before she finde him; that so she may know something of what he hath endured in coming to her, and may now readily open to him the next time. And therefore it is of dangerous consequence to shut out Christ, when he knocks and calls.

3. Consider the benefits and bounties which Christ brings with him into the Soul that opens to, and entertains him: Our Saviour saith, Rev. 3. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* If Christ will make a Feast unto the Soul that lets him in, it must needs be ill to keep him out. The Soul hath no such store of provision within her self, as to despise the Feasts which Christ will make her. In the Text Christ makes use of this Argument to move her to open the door, *For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*: which being taken in a good sense, (as was noted before) intimates the fulness of Blessings and Benefits which Christ comes loaden with, when he desires entrance into the Soul. Sure I am, that he that commands that *None should appear before the Lord empty*,

will not himself come empty-handed, to give his Spouse a visit, especially knowing her needs and for what end she desires his company. Would you see what Christ brings with him, read Cantic. 2. 3, 4, 5. *I sate down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleasant to my taste. He brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.* If he do but *breath upon our Gardens, the Spices will flow out*, Cant. 4. 16. He brings enough with him to feast us and all our friends, Cant. 5. 1. yea, and bids both them and us heartily welcome. See John 14. 18, 19. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* But what will he bring with him? He will bring life, vers. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also.* Where Christ comes, he brings that which will beget life, and spirits, grace and comfort: He fills the Soul with mirth and comfort, and abundant satisfaction where he comes, *Psal.* 36. 7, 8, 9. therefore it is dangerous not to open to him at his call.

4. Consider our great unworthiness that Christ should come under our roof. If *Jacob* found cause to say, that he was less than the least of Gods mercies, how much more we, reflecting upon our own unworthiness, may

say

say with *David*, Psal. 8. 4. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Would we take a true view of our own state, and see how fit we are for the entertainment of Jesus Christ, see what the Holy Ghost saith of us, *Ezech.* 16. there he tells thee thy pedigree, vers. 3. *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite*, a cursed brood, of a cursed stock. He tells thee also the manner of thy nativity, and in what posture God found thee, vers. 4, 5. a naked and wretched infant, cast out in its goar-blood and filthiness, none to pity or do any necessary office of kindness for thee; and in this posture and condition God found thee, and set his love upon thee, when there was nothing to be seen that was lovely in thee: thou wast a poor beggar, that had neither meat for thy belly, nor clothes to cover thy nakedness, nor a penny of money in thy purse; in this condition he found thee, set his love upon thee, *entered into covenant* of marriage *with thee*, espoused thee to be his Wife, decked and adorned thee with the Jewels of his Grace, *made thee comely through his comeliness put upon thee*, set thee up in high and honourable estate: see *Psal.* 45. 9. the Queen stands at Christs right hand in Gold of *Ophir*, vers. 13, 14. *The King's daughter is all glorious within, her raiment is of needle-work*, &c. *The Virgins*

his companions must wait upon her. All this, and more than the tongue of Men or Angels can expreſs, hath Chriſt done for thee, who art a moſt unworthy wretch; and therefore if now when he comes and calls, ſaying, *Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled*, &c. that now thou ſhouldeſt make ſuch a ſaucy and ſlight anſwer, *I have put off my coats, how ſhall I put them on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?* this may juſtly make Chriſt to repent of his match, and therefore of dangerous conſequence. We read, *Luke 7. 6.* the *Centurion*, when Chriſt was in the form of a Servant, in his eſtate of Humiliation, ſaid, *Lord I am not worthy that thou ſhouldeſt come under my roof.* How much more unworthy are we of the ſpiritual preſence and company of Chriſt, now he is in his eſtate of Exaltation? And therefore the moſt unworthy and diſingenious act that can be, is now to ſhut him out when he knocks and calls at the doors of our Hearts, deſiring entertainment. Well then may Chriſt take this as a moſt horrible affront, from ſuch baſe and unworthy upſtarts as we are, who but the other day were naked and beggarly creatures. But this will yet appear to be a greater affront, if

5. We conſider the great condeſcenſion of Chriſt

Christ in coming. Christ is the eternal Son of God, and Heir of all things; he is the King of Glory, *Psal.* 24. 7, 8, 9, 10. *His Throne is in Heaven: His Kingdom is over all: He is God blessed for ever*; needs not thee to adde any thing to his happiness. It is a condescension in him to behold the things that are done in Heaven, much more to behold any earthly creature. And yet this King of Kings, and Lord of Lords comes to thy poor, sooty, beggarly Cottage; knocks at the door of thy Heart, desires admission and entertainment there, and will be content either with such as he findes, or such as he brings. For thee therefore to shut out this King of Glory, is a most inexcusable affront. Let me illustrate these two Arguments, of our unworthyness, and Christ his condescension, by this similitude.

Suppose the greatest King or Emperor in the world should meet a poor, naked, nasty, deformed Beggar, nothing but Dirt and Lice, not a rag to cover her nakedness, not a morsel of bread to put in her mouth, not a Cottage to put her head in, not a penny in her purse, but more in debt than she and all her friends in the world are able to pay, and therefore cast out of her house and harbour, nothing but the bare Dunghil to lie upon, naked,

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whatever weather come, and so out of credit as that none would pity her, or let her come in: This great Emperor casts his eye upon her, pities her condition, sets his love upon her, promiseth that if she will take him for her Husband, he will pay her debts for her, procure her a discharge, will marry her, and make her his Bride or Queen, wash away all her filthyness, deck and adorn her with all costly Jewels and Raiment suitable to the quality and degree of such a persons wife as himself is, and that there shall be nothing wanting to make her happy: Hereupon the match is concluded, and he owns her for his Spouse, decks and adorns her according to promise, puts clothes upon her back rich and costly, and money in her purse; yet takes her not for the present home to his Court and Palace, but leaves her a while in her smoaky Cottage: she pretending love to him, thinks his absence long, and therefore sends to him to intreat his company: such is the ardour of his affection, that he comes without delay, though the weather be wet and stormy, the way foul and deep, the night dark, and the Journey tedious; findes her in bed, the doors shut, and therefore knocks and calls, saying, Open to me, my dearest Spouse, for I am come at thy request, though I have not a dry hair upon

upon my head, or thread upon my back; therefore open to me, and let me in? And she should say, I am gone to bed, I cannot get up, I cannot take so much pains now as to put on my coat, I am composing my self for rest, have washed my feet, have no minde to defile or dirty them with coming over the floor; and therefore if you would have come in, you should have come sooner. Suppose all this, would this answer be well taken? might not this be of dangerous consequence to this proud beggar, and give just occasion to blast all her hopes? Have I undervalued my self thus (may the King say) to advance a proud beggar, and doth she serve me thus? But I will leave her in the condition I found her, and come no more at her. This is the case between Jesus Christ and his Spouse; nay, there cannot be that inequality between the highest Prince in the world and the meanest Beggar, that there is between Jesus Christ and his Spouse. And therefore we may easily imagine, of how dangerous consequence it may be, to shut out Jesus Christ when he knocks and calls, especially when his coming is in answer to our Prayers.

6. Consider the great wrong which we do to Jesus Christ, if we do not open to him at his call. The wrong that will fall upon Christ,

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by our not opening to him, is set down in
Text, in these words, *For my head is fil*
with dew, and my locks with the drops of
night; which words (as we told you befo
may be taken in a bad sense as well as a go
denoting the misery, sufferings, and afflictio
that Jesus Christ endures, in making way, a
coming unto his people: in which words
would observe (1.) the great pains which J
sus Christ had taken to come; such was t
length and tediousness of the way, so ma
obstructions and lets, so many difficulties a
hardships, that he was benighted, and it w
got very late when he came: and therefo
pity to let him stand any longer wet an
weary. Oh, what haste would a loving Wi
make to arise and open to her Husband, in suc
a case as this is! And if she did not, h
Husband might well take it unkindly at h
hands: And yet the Spouse here makes a
Apology, *I have put off my coat*, &c. Suc
carriage as this may well cause him to with
draw.

2. Here is mention made of Drops an
Dews of the night; which seem to denot
Afflictions, and Sufferings, and Hardships; fo
so we finde them made use of in Scripture
when *Jacob* would set forth what hardship h
endured with his Father-in-law *Laban*, in hi
service

vice, he saith, Gen. 31. 40. *In the day the drought consumed me, and the frosts by night.* Afflictions in many places are compared to the Night; and so they may well be understood here, especially considering how wet and stormy a night it was. And truely Jesus Christ had very stormy weather to come to his Spouse: we read in Scripture what hardships he met with in the way. See how Christ himself complains, *Psal.* 102. 23. *He hath weakned my strength in the way, he hath shortned my days.* He met with the storms of divine wrath, which made him to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The storm was so bitter, that he prays, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:* and yet *it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin: He bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon his shoulders, and with his stripes we were healed: yet we accounted him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* He endured hardship not only from enemies, but from friends; and therefore saith, *These were the wounds which I received in the house of my friends,* Zech. 13. 6. And surely this was a stormy night; that the Spouse therefore should deny him entrance such a night as this was, especially when he had endured all this for her

sake,

sake, that he might come to her, was great unkindness, and might well provoke him to withdraw.

3. His urging this argument seems to imply the great prejudice that might come to him by her delay, and making him to stand wet and weary there. The force of the argument seems to lie here, and he thus argues: O my Spouse, I have undertaken a very sad and wearisome Journey for thy sake; I am at last (though late) come in a weary, wet, and dropping condition to the door, it may be very prejudicial to my health to stand long here in this condition I am in: as thou tender'st my life and health, and hast any respect for me, open and let me in, and suffer me not to stand here and catch my death. What more forcible argument could be made use of by a Wife that hath any real respect for her Husband? and yet in this sluggish humour she tells him, *She hath put off her Coat, and cannot put it on:* she will rather suffer her Husband to starve at the door, than she will be at the pains to put on her Coat and let him in.

Indeed such unkind carriages as these, are prejudicial to Christ's health, they wound and *Crucifie him afresh*, as the Apostle speaks, Heb. 6. 6. It must needs take a deep and sorrowful impression upon the heart of Christ, to

think

think that this should be the requital of all his sufferings, and that from the hand of his Spouse: well may this then cause his *Jealousie to burn*, and cause him in a rage to withdraw himself. Consider this, that every denial, every delay to open to Christ, cuts him to the very heart, and doth (as it were) make his pierced heart to bleed afresh.

4. The patience of Christ in all his sufferings, seems here to be pointed at also. He had not onely watched till he had felt a drop, but drops, yea, till his Head was filled with drops: he was wet to the very skin, not a dry thred, or free place about him, and therefore could endure to stay no longer: and therefore so earnestly calls, *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* To refuse to open in this case, must needs be a great wrong to Christ, and may cost us dear, if he should thereupon depart, as justly he might, being thus wronged and affronted by us. But

5. There is one thing more in the Call which makes the wrong intolerable, and that is, the place where he calls is his own house, the door whereat he knocks is his own door. We told you before, that the place where Christ knockt, was at the door of the heart.

And

And the Spouse had before given her heart to Christ; therefore it was his own door that he knocks at, and to his own Spouse that he calls, *Open to me*, &c. And therefore what an intolerable wrong is here, to keep Christ out of his own house, to keep his own door locked against him, in such weather, and in such a condition as he was! it is a wonder that instead of withdrawing, he did not fire the house about her ears, but that he is an infinitely patient Husband. Such carriages as these are intolerable wrongs to Christ, and therefore may cost us dear.

6. Consider the earnest and sweet perswasives that Christ at his coming and knocking makes use of to procure his admission. There are three Texts of Scripture which I would pitch upon, from thence to gather the sweet winning arguments that Christ ordinarily makes use of, when he knocks and calls at the door of his Spouse. One is the Text; another is the Parable of the great Supper at the marriage of the Kings son, *Luke* 14. 17, &c. and the third is *Rev.* 3. 20. And from these Texts I would gather these three Arguments, which Christ makes use of.

1. He woos and intreats from that neer relation that is between them. She was his sister and spouse; as if Christ should have said

said thus: My dear Sister and Spouse! it is thy dear Brother and Husband, that is come wet and weary to thy door, stands here, wet to the very skin, *My head filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* Canst thou finde in thine heart to lie snorting in thy bed, and taking thine ease, and hear thy poor afflicted wearied Brother and Husband stand without in all this stormy weather, knocking and calling, and not take so much pains as to come to the door to open to me? Thou needest not stir a foot out of the doors, but onely come to the door and open it. Hath thou no more of a sympathizing and commiserating spirit in thee? Will the nearness of our relation work no more upon thee? If I were a stranger to thee, I could say the less for my self; (though common pity should be shewed to strangers) but being so nearly related to thee, me thinks I should not need to multiply words, but might finde present admission and ready entertainment: why then dost thou not come? Now a refusal or slighty neglect in this case will scarcely be born: the bond of Relation should double the force of the Argument. And therefore unkindnesses from near relations, are of a more provoking and exasperating nature, than from other persons: because better things are expected. And there-

love to deny to open to Christ, wherein he calls, and pleads such an argumentative that must needs be highly provoking, and of dangerous consequence.

2. He wooes, and intreats from the dear and reciprocal affection that was between them: *My Love, my Dove, my undefiled.* Oh what sweet compellations! How can these be denied? And surely Christ is in good earnest, he doth not dissemble or flatter. Doth Elihu say, *Job* 32. 22. *I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away?* And do you think that our faithful Lord and Husband Jesus Christ would flatter and dissemble? Surely, no: He is real therefore in these sweet and heart-melting compellations, which are expressions of Love coming from his very heart. *My love, my dove, my undefiled.* As if Christ should have said, Thou art she, whose heart is joined to mine in most sincere and cordial Affection: I have set my love onely upon thee, and have chosen thee out of the world to be my Spouse, *Have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee*; and I know that thou hast a real kindness and respect for me, and that thou preferrest my Love, *before Wine*, or any thing that can be named: And that in thine eyes (however con-

contemptible I may be in the eyes of the world) I am altogether lovely. Oh therefore let not sloath and drowziness so far prevail, and make thee to forget thy love to me, and my love to thee (which I have given thee full and frequent assurance of) as to suffer me to stand here in the wet and cold. And what hard-hearted Wife could resist such a heart-melting Argument as this? Yea thou art my *Dove*. Doves are kind to, and mourn sore for the absence of one another: Thy mate, O my Dove! is at the door, and wilt thou not let him in? Yea further, thou art my undefiled, my chast Spouse; I cannot think that thine heart is in the least alienated from me, or set upon any other Lover: I am not jealous of thee, and therefore shew thy faithfulness and loyalty by opening unto me, that I may not have occasion of jealousie, lest in mine absence thy heart should be taken with some other Lover. If this argument will not work, what may Christ think? Would it not then be of dangerous consequence to do that, which may give occasion of jealousie to our Lord and Husband? and therefore the Doctrine must needs be true.

3. He wooes and intreats from the great advantage which his coming in would be unto her. Christ seldom or never

invites us to our loss, but we are sure to be gainers by every duty or work he puts us upon: He tells her here, that *his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night.* Which being taken in a good sense (as was noted before) imports, that Christ came full fraught with blessings and benefits, not an hair of his head but would afford some drop or comfort of benefit, which would make amends for the pains which she should be at, in rising and opening to him. And if we read Rev. 3. 20. he tell us, that *If any man will open unto him, he will come in and sup with them, and they with him.* There is Emphasis and weight in every word, he would *come in.* This piece of condescention in him, was a sufficient recompence of her pains; it was a great honour, that such a guest should come under her roof. That such a glorious person as Christ, who is God equal with the Father, and *before whom the very Angels cover their faces with their wings, as not able to behold his Glory.* That such a glorious person as this, should come into such a smoaky cottage, as that of mans heart, is wonderful condescention, and therefore honour enough put upon the Spouse, which might abundantly recompence her labour in opening to him. But this is not all, he would *come in,* and therefore she (being within)

within) should have his company, stand in his presence, *in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.* And surely his company is no little worth, and that she her self being judge, or else wherefore doth she so earnestly pray for it, *Cant. 4. p. 16.* Fruition is that which Love labours after, and which alone gives satisfaction and rest to the motion of love. She might now enjoy her beloved, which she had so earnestly panted after, and long looked for: and surely her pains in rising and opening to him could not be so great, as to over-weigh the benefit and desireableness of his company. But yet this is not all, he would *sup with her.* Oh wonderful condescention! will the King of Glory take, and be content with such a supper as can be provided for him in such a poor beggarly Cottage as man's Heart? is there any dish there that can please or give content to him? Have we any thing in our Hearts that will feast Christ? Oh then open quickly, and let him have it without any delay. For, to be sure, there is nothing there, that is worth the having, but what is of his own sending in: and it is no better, if not worse, for coming through our hands; and therefore stick not to let him have it.

But yet further, he will not onely *sup with*

that is, be refreshed with the fruitfulness and sweetness of our Graces, as is evident Cant. 5. 1. but *we shall sup with him*, that is, he will feast us with his comforts and benefits. Christ never comes empty handed, but he brings such blessings and benefits with him, as by their excellency and suitableness, will not fail abundantly to refresh our souls, and wherewith *the Soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, as *David* was, Psal. 63. 5, 6. Christ never comes in unto any soul, that sincerely opens to him, but he *takes them into his Banqueting house, and his banner over them is love: He stays them with flaggons, and comforts them with apples*, Cant. 2. 4. 5. *He abundantly satisfies them with the fatness of his house, and makes them drink of the river of his pleasures; for with him is the Fountain of Life, and in his light we shall see light.* Psal. 36. 8, 9. And will not then Christ's Feast make amends for our pains in opening to him? But you will say, What can Christ bring with him in such dark and stormy weather? Read but *Luke* 14. 17. It is supper-time, *Come, for all things are now ready.* There is no dish wanting that may make a compleat Feast, all things are in a prepared posture; you need do no more but take and eat. Is it therefore better to lie starving in thy bed, than

to rise and eat? Will not Christ's Kingly Feast (if it were nothing but for the rarities of it) make amends for thy pains in rising? You see therefore what force this argument hath every way to prevail with her to arise and open to him; and can we think our denial will be well taken?

Let me onely adde this consideration more from this last expression, *Luke* 14. 17. *Come, for all things are now ready.* Christ hath been at great care and charges to provide a Royal and suitable Supper for us, (not suitable to our deserts; for then it would be a miserable one; but suitable to our need and necessity) wherein no variety is wanting, that may either nourish us, or truely satisfie us, and make us happy; and all things are now prepared and in a readiness; so that if you come not, and that quickly, Supper will be spoiled, and all his labour and charge will be lost: And will he take this well at your hands? Verily no, *v.* 24. *None of those that were bidden shall taste of my Supper*, since they *make so light of it.* And yet rather than I will want guests for my Table, and my Supper be lost, I will send into the *hedges* and *high-ways*, and *compel others to come in*; but as for those that made so light of it, they shall not taste it. How sad will it be with every soul that is

 thus

sign shut out from Christ's Supple! Is it not then of dangerous consequence to exclude Christ when he knocks and calls, and these sweet and heart-melting arguments (flowing from the highest degree of love and condescention) are turned back with an unkinde (though complementing) denial?

3. Argument to prove that to refuse to open to Christ when he knocks and calls, may be of dangerous consequence, especially when his coming is in answer to our prayers, may be taken from the unreasonableness of all excuses that may be pretended as the reason of our sluggishness and sloth. It is true, when we should do any thing for Christ that may cost us any pains or trouble, the flesh is very fruitful and abundant in producing shifts and excuses to hide and cover our backwardness and unwillingness: and indeed, so apt are we to favour our selves, that the meanest and most unreasonable excuse, (to us) seems to carry strength enough of reason, to render the calls and commands of Christ unreasonable, and our refusal plausible. If we look back into the Text, we shall finde the Spouse her arguing so unreasonable, that the very arguments she makes use of, are so far from reasonable excuses, that if right conclusions were drawn from them, they would rather

enforce

enforce Christ's request, than excuse her sloth: And at the best, they are but frivolous shifts to excuse her sluggishness. And (indeed) such are all the excuses which the flesh makes, against the calls and commands of Christ. Let us a little examine them, and you will see the weakness of them. *I have put off my coats, how shall I put them on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* Putting off the Coats, intimates to us, the laying aside of her watchfulness, as being free from the fear of any danger, and no longer expecting or waiting for the company of any friend: whereas the keeping of our Garments fast girded to us, implies the contrary. And this is the argument that she pleads, why it was an impossible thing for her to arise and open to Christ. But is this good arguing, when truely enquired into, and laid down in plain terms? I have laid aside my watch, I expect no further company of Christ this night, neither do I much desire it, but had rather take my rest.

Is this she that but now, in a sense of her want, had begged so earnestly for Christ's company, and was so desirous to be prepared for it, that Christ might not finde her undressed? Compare this Answer with her Prayer, *Cant.* 4. 16. and see how those two arguings will stand

stand together; and yet both come forth
the same mouth
then so great? and is her love to Christ no
so cold? Would she then have Christ to come
(and calls him *her beloved*, the *beloved of h*
soul) and will she not now watch for him
one hour? but hath laid by her Coat
watchfulness, as though she never looked for
him, or cared for his company? yea, will not
gird on her Coat of watchfulness, now when
Christ stands at the door? but her coat is off,
and shall not be put on again that night. May
not the Spouse be ashamed to own such an
argument as this? was it not her sin to lay
aside her watch, when she had begged Christ's
company? and will she excuse one sin with
another? excuse her present sloath with her un-
watchfulness? Might she not have more rea-
sonably argued thus? I may put on my Coat
with shame enough, since my beloved Husband
hath found me in this careless posture, and
wretched regardlessness of his coming, when I
have so earnestly prayed for it. And thus the
Argument would conclude against her, and
be no excuse for her. But again, I have laid
by my watch, how shall I take it up again?
what, is the Devil, and all the Enemies of thy
soul asleep? Is not the night the time when
Thieves walk about, and seek their opportuni-

ty

have

have been exceeding weary with working and labouring all day, and now have had aside my work; and on purpose and designe, that I might take the more full and quiet rest, I have washed my feet, and am composing my self for rest: and therefore it is unreasonable to call me out of bed now to defile my feet. Let us a little weigh the argument, and you shall see, how instead of making for her as an excuse, it makes strongly against her. If Christs work so wearisome and irksome, that she is now so weary of it, that she must purposely and designedly lay it aside? was it not her sin to be weary of well-doing? And is she now so bold and daring in sin, as to plead this as an argument to prove Christ unreasonable in calling her to her work again? Doth Christ say, *Blessed are they that at his coming he shall finde so doing?* And may not she be ashamed to be found idle, and that upon deliberate thoughts? She cannot say that this sluggish fit was a surprize, and that she was overtaken against her will: for she deliberated about it, designed it, and in order to her more quiet rest, had washed her feet; and therefore may be ashamed of it, since her work is not finished and perfected. Much more may she be ashamed to plead this as an argument of Christ's unreasonableness in calling,

ing. She might indeed be ashamed to let Christ come in and see how little work she had done; but little reason to complain of her weariness with doing Christ's work. But this is not all; for her refusal is most shameless, in that she accounts it a defiling of her feet to arise and open to Christ. And is this so? That which she calls a washing of her feet, in reason might rather be accounted a defiling them, than her rising to open to Christ; that was her sin, but this is her duty. That she might be ashamed of, but this she need not. The dirt of affliction, and difficulty in duty, may easily be wiped off; but the filth of sin is not so easily washed off: nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse from this, and she must open and let him in, before this can be done. And therefore, if she had understood what she had said, she might have been ashamed of such an argument as this; but that persons shame at nothing that may carry the least colour of excuse; when they are mindful to do any thing, they will abuse, and miscal, and misrepresent things. Wilful sloath and sluggish security, laying aside our watch and the work of Christ, must be called and nick-named a putting off our coats, and washing our feet: whereas if this be washing the feet, I know not what is defiling them.

What

What horrible blindneſs is there in ſinners, t
caſt that upon Chriſt and his work, whi
he may (with greater force and ſhame to o
caſt back in our faces! And yet this was t
Spouſe her excuſe; the unreaſonablen
whereof we do here ſee. Oh! ſhould Chri
have given himſelf to eaſe, and compoſe
himſelf for reſt, when he was about the wo
of our Redemption, tugging and toiling
it, till he ſwet *drops of blood and water*; y
till his hearts blood was ſpent, and poure
upon the ground as water: and ſhould h
then have pleaded this argument that here fl
pleads to him; *I have put off my coat, ho
ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, ho
ſhall I defile them?* I am well enough, and
reſt in the boſome of my Father, ſolacing m
ſelf in the enjoyment of him, and repoſin
my ſelf in his eternal Love: how can I leav
this, and defile my ſelf with the rags of hu
mane nature, and load my back with th
burden of humane ſins: and though I be th
King of Glory, yet endure the contradictio
of ſinners againſt my ſelf, and take upon m
the form of a ſervant, and become obedie
unto the Law: and all to do ſinful rebellio
man a courteſie and kindneſs, to bring hi
out of that miſery, which he could never ri
himſelf of, but muſt have ſunk and periſhe
under

under, to all eternity; and nothing but just, because he had wilfully, by his own sin, plunged himself into this gulf of misery. If (I say) Christ should have thus pleaded, when he was about the work of our Redemption, and our necessity called for his help, or we were undone for ever; what had become of us? And yet we are not ashamed to plead such unreasonable excuses, when he calls upon us to open to him. Surely, such unkind requital of Christs kindness to us, and such unreasonable excuses for our own lazines and sloath, may highly provoke and displease him, and prove of very dangerous consequence to us. The like may be said of those excuses made *Luke* 14. and indeed of all excuses that the flesh can make against our opening to Christ at his call; because there can be no reason given why we should keep Christ out of his own house (our hearts) since he hath so dearly bought and paid for them. But by what hath been said already, in this case, you may see the unreasonableness of keeping Christ out of our hearts, when he calls for admission: which may be sufficient to prove that it may be of dangerous consequence, and therefore I shall no further enlarge upon this head.

9. I might draw an argument *a facto*, and

argue

argue ab esse ad posse such a thing was, and therefore it may be. It pretends no very sad consequence to the Spouse here to keep out Christ. He in a discontent withdrew, and departed, and left her in a very sad condition; both in respect of her inward guilt, for giving him such an unkind, ungrateful, and irrational answer; and also in respect of the pains which she was glad to take before she found him again: before, it would defile her feet to come over the housefloor to open to her beloved, and was too hard and unreasonable work for her to do; but now she follows him, and calls after him, through the miry streets and high-ways, and never complains of weariness, nor the foulness of the way, but would be glad to finde him whatever it cost her, or whatever she endured. And being of such consequence to her, why may it not be so to us? nay certainly it will be so, if we, as she, refuse to open to him at his call. But I have exceeded my first intentions, in enlarging upon the former particulars, and therefore shall speak no more to this. The Doctrine being sufficiently proved, by what hath been already said.

And so I come at last to make Application, and the 1 *Use* shall be by way of Instruction, or Information.

Is it of such dangerous consequence to be sluggish and secure, when Christ calls? Then hence learn,

1. That it will be of blessed consequence to be watchful, and in a readiness to open when Christ knocks and calls. Our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* 24. 46, 47. *Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, shall finde so doing* —— *He shall make him ruler over all his goods.* And therefore by the same argument he adviseth us to watchfulness, and that without weariness, or giving over till he come, *Luke* 12. 35, 36, 37, 38. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye your selves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom when the Lord cometh shall finde watching: Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and finde them so, blessed are those servants.* Mark, that at whatsoever time he come, if he finde them about their watch, and at their work, they shall be blessed. But that I may clear this a little further, that they are thus blessed, consider with me these few particulars.

1. Consider the satisfaction that it will be

to a gracious heart, to be at home, and at his work, or on his watch, when Christ calls. If an intimate Friend do but call at our door, we account it an happiness that he found us within. How much more will a gracious soul account it an happiness, that his beloved Jesus, at his coming, found him within, in a readiness and preparedness to give him the best entertainment that he had? Especially considering these three things.

1. The duty which we owe to Christ, to be always upon our watch, *Matth.* 25. 13. *Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when your Lord will come.* which shews that it is the will and command of Christ, that we should always watch till Christ do come. Oh! saith the Soul, this is my duty, never to sleep or be secure, but always to be watching: what an happy chance was it, that I was upon my watch when my Lord and Master came! and that he found me so doing, found me in my duty. Surely he will take this well at my hand, and I shall be blessed.

2. Considering our preparedness to receive him. He that looks for a Friend, will have every thing in readyness against he come, to make his friend welcome. So will a gracious Soul that expects Christ his coming, will have every thing in a readiness for his welcome

come entertainment, and account it his happiness that he had so. It will be wonderful satisfaction to the Soul, to have Christ come, when she is in a readiness and preparedness for his entertainment.

3. Consider the Souls earnest looking for Christ his coming. When we expect a friend coming, and have taken a great deal of pains to prepare, and make ready, for his entertainment, and have all things in readiness; we stand at the door and watch, and begin to think him long, and ready to think every one that comes to the door to be our friend: when our friend doth come, we are very glad, and bid him heartily welcome, and tell him we began to think him long, and were afraid lest any business should have prevented his coming, and therefore are very glad to see him come, and account our selves happy that our expectation is fulfilled. So is it with the Soul that is in this waiting posture for Christ. O my dear Saviour! saith she, I thought it long that thou hadst been absent from me; I gave thee an earnest invitation, being earnestly desirous of thy company, and sensible how greatly I stood in need of it: I endeavoured to prepare and make ready for thy entertainment, and having done that, I began to think thee long, every hour hath seemed ten to me

that thou hast delayed: and I have waited in hope of thy coming, and yet not without fear, lest something or other should prevent thy coming. But thy stay so long hath quickned my desire, and now I am more abundantly glad that thou art come, by how much thy stay made me afraid that thou wouldest not come. O welcome, welcome, my long looked-for dear Saviour, thy coming makes amends for my long waiting: now I think my labour and patience well bestowed; come in, my dearly beloved! for all things are in readiness, and prepared for thy entertainment. Thus the Soul accounts her self happy that Christ came thus seasonably, and that she was thus fitted and in a ready posture for his reception and entertainment.

2. That they are blessed whom Christ findes in this posture will appear, if we consider the great satisfaction that Christ will take at his coming, to finde us in a watchful, expecting, and prepared posture. This posture will so wonderfully please Jesus Christ, that instead of sitting down, and being attended and served by us, *He will make us to sit down, and will come forth, and gird himself and serve us.* Luke 12. 37. We shall be the Guest, and he will be the Servitour. The satisfaction which this will be to Christ, may appear in three things.

1. Find-

finding us in this posture, he takes himself to be welcome. If at our coming to our friends house, we finde not onely the door open, the house dressed, and all in order; but we finde our friend in the door waiting and earnestly looking for us, thinking our tarrying long, we may reasonably conclude we shall be surely welcome, now we are come. So when Christ findes the Heart prepared, and the Spouse in the door watching, or looking in the way wherein she expects to see him coming; he may thence conclude, that he is a welcome guest to that soul. Surely, saith Christ, I shall now be a welcome guest to my Spouse, now she is so earnestly waiting and looking for me. And this pleaseth Christ more than all the varieties that she can possibly prepare for him. For alas! she is but poor, hath no rich entertainment for him, but onely such as is of his own sending and preparing, and therefore welcome is likely to be his best fare, and all that she can give him; and therefore Christ expects no great matters from her, but to have the door open, and himself made welcome when he comes. And where he findes this, he is so well pleased, that he will suffer no want of any thing needful to be while he stays. He will be at the charges of the Feast, and of the dressing of it too

And therefore we read, *Cant.* 5. 1. that he not onely eats, but gathers his fruits himself. *I have gathered my myrrhe with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey,* &c.

2. Finding us in this posture, he may expect that we are at leisure from other company and business to entertain him with our company. Christ loves not to come when his Spouse is in the throng, or crowd of worldly company and business; for then he shall have no time of private conference and discourse with her, which is the main of his business; and therefore in this case both he and she would lose the benefit and sweetness of the opportunity. Friends account that time lost that they cannot enjoy one another, though they be together all the while. If by throng of company they cannot have their discourse and conference, which they designed in their meeting, they account their time lost: and are ready to say, What an unhappy thing was it that we met at such a season as this, and that thus we were interrupted in our discourse? The more intimate that friends are, the more private matter of discourse they have, and the less they care to be interrupted with company. None more intimate than Christ and his Spouse, and having matter of private conference with her, doth not care to come at such a time when she

he hath a crowd of other company about her, but when she is alone. And therefore when he comes, if she be not alone, he will endeavour to take her apart by her self, and then his discourse will be most heeded, and have most effectual influence upon her. Therefore we read, *Hos.* 2.14. *I will allure her,* (saith God) *and bring her into the wilderness, and there will speak comfortably unto her,* or *speak to her heart,* as the word signifies. Now when Christ findes the Soul waiting and looking for him, all alone, either in her door, or in the high-way, he may well conclude, I come reasonably, for yonder is my Spouse all alone, free from cumber and other business, waiting for my coming, and therefore I may expect her company. And this abundantly pleaseth him, for it is her company he chiefly comes for. Christ cares not to come when the Soul is crowded with the Flesh and the World: He desires her company alone, and is best pleased when he findes it so.

3. Finding us in a posture of Watchfulness, our clothes on, and our loins girt, he may reasonably suppose us not to be in a drowzy and sluggish condition; and that therefore his company will be pleasant, and not burdensome to us, and his discourse will be better heeded by us. When Sleep and Sluggishness

overtakes us, the company of our best Friends is but burdensome, and their discourse but little regarded; we had rather have their room than their company, their silence than their discourse, because we are desirous to compose our selves for rest and sleep. So is it with the Spouse of Christ, when she is in a sleepy and secure condition, his company is no whit pleasant, and his discourse sinks but ear-deep, (if it do that) and therefore doth little good. Now Christ loves not to come and finde his Spouse in such a posture as this; but when he findes her watching, or busie at her spiritual work, in a lively condition, Now (saith he) my company will be acceptable, now in a lively manner will she unbosome herself to me, tell me her whole state and condition: and I shall as freely impart my counsels and comforts unto her. This therefore is the condition that I desire to finde her in; and finding her in this condition, it yields abundant satisfaction to Christ. This therefore is a blessed posture, wherein the Soul is in a posture to give Christ such abundant satisfaction.

4. That they are thus blessed, that Christ at his coming findes upon their watch will appear if we consider the honours and benefits which he will conser upon them. He will commend and praise them, he will give them

them honourable titles, *Well done good and faithful ſervants*; he will give them bountiful rewards and a ſumptuous feaſt, and he himſelf will come forth and ſerve them: all which is ſufficiently evident from what hath been ſaid before, and therefore needs no further enlargement.

2. Hence we may learn the reaſon of the damnable and deſperate condition of many Sinners; and the mournful, drooping, and ſeeking condition of many Saints. It is not becauſe Chriſt ſeldome comes abroad and knocks at the doors of their hearts; but becauſe when he comes, he findes ſuch unready admiſſion and entertainmet. If the queſtion be asked, whence it is that ſo many ſinners periſh everlaſtingly, and that under Goſpel-light? The anſwer muſt be, not becauſe he never calls or knocks at their doors, but becauſe they will not open and let him in. Our Saviour tells us the reaſon, John 3. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light.* So Mat. 23. 37. *O Jeruſalem, —— how often would I have gathered thee, as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? but ye would not.* So alſo, *Prov.* 1. 24, &c. *Becauſe I called, and ye refuſed —— But ye ſet at nought all my*

counſels,

counsels, and would none of my reproofs: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. How often doth Christ knock and call by his Word, by his Rod, by his Messengers, by the impulses of his Spirit, and convictions of Conscience? and yet sinners are in a deep sleep of Security, and will not open to him. This is the ground of their condemnation.

Again, if it be asked why we see so many Christians walking in darkness, and seeing no light, enquiring (as here the Spouse did) *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? If ye see him, tell him that I am sick of love. I have sought him, but cannot finde him; I have called him, but he gives me no answer.* If it be asked, what is the reason why it is thus with many Believers? It may be answered, there is cause for it, they have given Christ some unkinde answer: he *hath called, but they have not heard*, or heeded. He hath knocked, and they have not opened. And therefore he will make them sensible of their affront and unhandsome carriage, before they shall finde him again.

3. Hence also we may learn what a gross cheat the Devil and our own Hearts have put upon us, and the great danger we have many of us been in, by our refusing to open to Christ at his knocks and calls. A greater

cheat

heat the Devil could not put upon us; nor greater danger can we possibly be in, than to be perswaded by him to refuse, or delay, to open to Christ. And yet how ordinary is it for the Devil and carnal Reason to put this cheat upon us! and by being so often and so long cheated, what dreadful and tremendous danger have we many of us brought our selves into! Christ hath called and called again and again, by his Word, and Providences; by his Mercies, and Judgements; by his Spirit, and our own Consciences: and yet from time to time, to this very day, we have put him off with frivolous and vain excuses, and have not fully opened the door of our Hearts to him. Christ hath pressed us so far with arguments, (and those convincing and startling ones, and of all sorts) so that we could not deny but this hath been the voice of Christ, insomuch that he may say, What could I have done or said more than I have done? And yet what cold entertainment hath he found at our doors? May he not justly complain of us, as of *Israel* of old, *Isai.* 53. 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord made bare?* It would make a man to tremble to think at the loud knocks and calls that God hath given to sinners in these Nations, and yet to this day hath been shut out! few

have

have sincerely received him into their Hearts; nay, may it not be truely said as is complained *John* 1. 11. *He came to his own, and his own received him not!* Many that have made a large profession of the Name of Christ, that yet have not truely received him into their hearts. Nay, may not Christ say, *I am near in their Mouth, but far from their Reins?* Nay, are there not many that (we hope) are truely the Spouse of Christ, and have many time prayed for the breathings of his Spirit and his comfortable presence, and yet at his coming have shut him out? and yet, where are there any but they have their plausible excuses? though if they were all examined, they would prove as unreasonable as this in the Text. But these we shall make further inquiry into under another Use: onely here let us take notice what an horrible cheat the Devil and carnal Reason have hereby put upon us; and what a sad and dreadful condition we have hereby brought our selves into. Which will undeniably appear, if we consider,

1. What, and who those pretended Friends and Lovers are that we have entertained in our hearts, while we have shut out Christ, and refused to open at his call. Shall I tell you 1, what, and 2, who they are?

1. What they are. The Lovers which we have

have doted upon, and entertained in our hearts while Christ hath been kept out, they are first, False and flattering Lovers. They do not love us really and cordially, though they make great shew and pretence of love. There is none that loves so really as Jesus Christ doth. His love was towards us while we were Enemies to him, and did him much disservice; but these onely love us while we please and gratifie them. Do but cross the Devil, the World, or Flesh, and you shall finde they will hate you, and manifest themselves your Enemies. Christ's love is pure love, without any by-ends: but the love of these is onely a pretended love for their own ends, and the carrying on of their own designes. His love is a love indeed; and he hath by what he hath done and suffered for us, in real and great deeds, manifested the reality of his love: but their love is meerly verbal and complemental, promising much, but performing little or nothing of what they promise. His love is chiefly manifested in adversity, in straights, in distresses, when all others frown upon us, and we have nowhither to betake our selves but to him: but their love is onely in prosperity, and when we have the least need of them: For if ever we really stand in need of them (as at death and at Judgement) then they will

will be the furtheſt off from helping us, or affording any relief: nay then they will appear to be our enemies, and the firſt that ſhall ſet themſelves againſt us: And are theſe friends to be truſted, and to be kept in our hearts, when Jeſus Chriſt muſt be ſhut out? How do we ſuffer our ſelves to be miſerably deluded by theſe errand cheats?

2. Theſe Lovers and pretended Friends, they are unprofitable Lovers and Friends. Let them afford the beſt help they can, they can afford no ſuch benefit and advantage as Jeſus Chriſt can and doth. The Wiſe-man ſpeaking of worldly things ſaith, *Prov.* 23. 5. *Wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not? Riches certainly make themſelves wings, and flie, as an eagle towards Heaven:* There is no ſecuring or holding faſt theſe things. When the Devil would have tempted our Saviour to worſhip him, *Matth.* 4. he ſhews him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them, and ſaith, *All theſe will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* And yet this was not in his power to give. But ſuppoſe theſe were in his power to give, and that he would be as good as his word, and really give them; yet, *What would it profit a man to gain the whole world, and looſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* But

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe he would perſwade you, that you might gain the one and ſave the other: yet the Apoſtle tells us the contrary, 1 Joh. 2. 15. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* And I am ſure, if the love of God be not in him, he cannot ſave his ſoul: For the Apoſtle ſaith, *If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be accurſed*, Gal. 1. 8. and *If we love not him that is begotten, we cannot love him that begetteth; for the Father and the Son are one*: and therefore there is no real profit to be got by them, but are great loſers, and therefore in hearkening unto them we are miſerably cheated.

3. They are very uncomfortable Friends, if compared with Chriſt. They pretend Mirth, and Pleaſure, and Delight, but even in the midſt of mirth the heart is ſad: no real mirth or chearfulneſs can they give. But he that hath but once taſted how good and pleaſant Chriſt's company is, he may truely ſay, he never met with ſuch a good, and chearful, and comfortable Friend in all his life; he may ſay with the Spouſe, *I ſate down under his ſhadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleaſant to my taſte.* There is none of theſe pretended friends, but there is much ſowreneſs, harſhneſs, and unpleaſantneſs to be found in them: but of Jeſus Chriſt it may be ſaid, *He is altogether*

gether lovely; *his* very *yoak is easie, and his burden light:* there is comfort in his very Crosse; in his company a Believer may sing at midnight in a prison, with his feet fast in the stocks: but as for the pleasures of sin, they are but short, and they alwaies end in pain. What *Paul* said of sin in respect of profit, *Rom. 6. 21. What profit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* So may I say, What pleasure can you take in those pretended friends, whose company will certainly end both in shame and pain?

4. Their designe is destructive. Whatever they may pretend, and however they may flatter thee, and promise rest, and sleep, and quietness, it is but that they may destroy thee, and that to all eternity. They are but such like friends to thee as *Dalilah* was to *Sampson*; if she cause him to sleep upon her lap, it is but that she may cut his Locks, and deliver him weak into the hand of his enemy to torment him. If they cry *Peace, peace* unto thee, and lull thee asleep in security, it is but that they may binde thee (with the Devils) in chains of darkness, to be reserved to the Judgment of the great Day. Are these therefore friends to be trusted? Who while they flatter thee, purposely designe thy destruction, and aim at nothing more than the ruine both of thy Soul and Body.

Body. Oh how do persons suffer themselves to be cheated, by the flattering pretences of false friends, but real enemies! and in the mean while keep out Jesus Christ out of their hearts, who would be a friend indeed. Thus you see what those are that are entertained in the heart, while Jesus Christ is shut out. But

2. Let us see who these are, that do thus cheat us. I will in short tell thee who they are (though by the marks which I have already given of them, thou mayest easily guess who they are.) They are the three grand Enemies of thy Soul. The Devil, the World, and the Flesh: These are they, that thou (taking them for thy friends, and welcome guests into thy heart) art cheated by. Enemies they are, and the greatest, and most inveterate, implacable, malicious, and unmercyful Enemies that thou hast. Yea, besides them thou hast not such Enemies in all the world; and yet these dost thou receive for thy bosome-friends: and that while thou shutteſt out him that is the best and surest friend that thou hast in the world, that hath done more for thee than all the world besides. What *Joab* said to *David* when he mourned so excessively for *Absalom*, that may I truely say to thee: *By this I perceive that thou loveſt thine Enemies, and hateſt*

thy Friends. For if these false, dissembling and rebellious *Absaloms* might but live, and be thy companions, thou mattereſt not though Jesus Christ be ſtarved to death at the door of thine heart. Oh wretched cruelty! and miſguided, blindfolded affection! that will thus be cheated from time to time by the flatteries of them that ſeek thy life! and theſe muſt needs be they that keep poſſeſſion in thy heart; for none but theſe (who have ever been mortal Enemies to Jeſus Chriſt) would give thee counſel to keep Chriſt out of thy heart. To be ſure, God would not give thee this advice; for he loves and is ever well pleaſed with his Son, and would have him ſeated in the Royal-Throne of thy Heart. Yea, he is *reconciling the world unto himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt.* He hath appointed thy reception and entertainment of Jeſus Chriſt as the onely way to happineſs.

Surely it is not Chriſt that counſels thee thus; for it is he that *ſtands knocking at thy door* of thy Heart for entrance and admiſſion. It is not the Spirit of God, for he is alſo the Spirit of Chriſt, and is ſent upon his errand, to perſwade thee to open to Chriſt: yea, he is heartily *grieved*, when thou *reſiſteſt* theſe motions of his. And if Chriſt may not come in, he will not long ſtay there himſelf ſtri-

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ving with thee. It cannot be thy Conscience, for that is a faithful witness and admonisher, and will speak truely when it may be heard: and the counsel it gives is according to the will of God, whose vice-gerent it is, and whose authority it bears in the Soul; and therefore it can be no other that gives thee this counsel, but those Enemies before mentioned, Satan, the World, and the Flesh; for the counsel is like them, and rightly fathers it self: and what folly is it thus to be cheated by such Enemies to thy Soul as these are, and that from time to time?

2. The greatness of this cheat, and the wrong which we sustein by it will appear, if we consider the advantage which these our Enemies have got, by our hearkning unto them, and suffering our selves to be cheated by them thus long. I shall onely mention these three advantages they have got, by perswading thee to keep thy heart shut against Christ. Advantages they are to them and their designes; but most fearful wrongs to thee, and to thy Soul.

1. They have occasioned thee to commit many a sin, which might have been prevented if thou hadst long since opened to Christ at his call. I do not here speak of thy great sin in refusing to open at Christ's call, which is

every time renewed and repeated, when thou refuseſt to open, whatever thine excuſe be: Nor do I ſpeak of the ſins that are couched and included in the unreaſonableneſs of thy excuſes, though theſe be neither few nor little. But I ſpeak of that ſinful frame of heart and courſe of life, that thou leadeſt and liveſt in, while Jeſus Chriſt is kept out of thy Soul. Reflect upon thy ſelf, and conſider how long it is ſince Chriſt gave thee the firſt call, and conſider what courſe of life thou haſt led ſince, how many wilful and known ſins thou haſt committed, one upon the back of another, yea the ſame ſins many a time over and over again: theſe ſins, all of them, might have been prevented, and many of them (doubtleſs) had been prevented, if thou hadſt opened to Chriſt at his firſt call. If thou hadſt ſuffered him to have come in, he would have changed the habit, frame, bent, and inclination of thy heart, and courſe of thy life and converſation; he would have ſet thee about his work, and kept thee employed in his buſineſs, that thou ſhouldeſt not have had time or leaſure to have hearkned to Satans temptations. It is Satans finding us idle, that moſtly gives advantage to his temptations. Chriſt would have put his Spirit within thee, that ſhould have helped thee againſt temptations, and would have *puri-*

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fied thy heart by faith. His grace should have been sufficient for thee, and his strength made perfect in thy weakness: He would have *kept that thy foot should not have slidden, who is the Keeper of Israel, that neither slumbers nor sleeps.* He would have armed thee with the whole Armour of God, whereby thou mightest have *resisted* and repelled, or *quenched all the fiery darts of the wicked.* He would have *renewed thee with* daily renewed *strength in thy Soul.* Yea, *He would have kept thee by his almighty power, through faith, unto salvation.* Thou hadst not therefore had so many ghastly sins, to have reflected and looked back upon with a trembling heart, and griping conscience, with horrour and consternation, as now thou hast. If there were no more but this consideration, (methinks) it might be sufficient to silence all excuses, and cavils of carnal reason, and make the soul afraid of ever refusing to open when Christ calls; and might fully convince us of the grand cheat and irreparable wrong which our enemies have put upon us, by perswading us not to open to Jesus Christ.

2. Consider the high affront and provocation which we have given to Jesus Christ, by keeping him out so long. He hath called again and again, and was desirous to come in,

but we would not: He hath stood *knocking till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night*, and yet could get nothing from us but frivolous and vain excuses. And what do we think will be the issue of all this? Will his patience never be worn out? Will his *wrath never be kindled in his breast?* Will the stirrings of his Spirit never have end? Will the day of Grace never have a night? Will he never *swear in his wrath, that thou shalt not enter into his rest?* Tremble, O fond man! to think at those things. It hath been of dangerous and dreadful consequence, thus to deny him admission: He hath thereupon withdrawn himself and departed, and sometimes never returned again. But if he have been found, it hath been after long, weary, and tedious seeking of him, And why may he not do so again? Nay certainly, he will do so. And therefore the wrong and cheat which the Devil, the World and the Flesh have put upon thee, is an unsufferable wrong, which they can never make thee amends for; let them therefore cheat thee no longer.

3. Consider that every knock and call that Christ gives, and we refuse, doth lock the door of the heart faster against Christ, than it was lockt before; so that if ever Christ get in, he must

muſt give fierter knocks and louder calls than ever he did before; he muſt take ſome other courſe with thee, than ever he hath yet taken. Therefore ſaith the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 3. 13. *Exhort one another while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfuesſ of ſin.* Sin deceitfully and inſenſibly hardens the heart, and by degrees cauterizeth or ſeareth the heart and conſcience, that it grows brawny and paſt feeling: and then Chriſt may call and call again, and to little purpoſe; and therefore it is unſpeakable wrong which thine enemies have already done thee; and it would be wrong paſt recovery, if they ſhould go on to cheat thee ſtill.

Uſe 2. Is it of ſuch dangerous conſequence to be ſluggiſh, ſecure, and ſloathful, when Chriſt knocks and calls, eſpecially when his coming is in anſwer to our Prayers? Then this may afford matter of enquiry and examination, to enquire how the caſe ſtands between Chriſt and our Souls, at this day. We profeſs our ſelves to be the *Spouſe of Chriſt*; and if ſo, it is very probable that he doth now and then viſit us, and comes to the door of our hearts. We profeſs to be *a candleſtick in Chriſts right hand*; and if ſo, it is likely *he walks* ſometimes *in the midſt of the golden candleſticks*. We profeſs to be the Church

and People of God; and if Christ hath not intimacy and familiarity with, and gives frequent visits to his Church, where can Christ be expected to be found? We have the Worship and Ordinances of Christ, and his Name recorded among us: and he hath said, that *where he records his name, there he will meet his people, and bless them.* We are under his special care and providence, about whom he is in a special manner concerned: And therefore it concerns us to know how we stand in his favour. And as this is the state of the Church in general, so is it the state of every particular Member, and is the concern of every one of us to know how matters stand between Christ and our Souls: Whether we be in his favour, and have his pleasant company; or whether he have turned his back, *withdrawn* himself, and be gone away from us in a discontent, because he hath *knocked* and *called*, and we have not opened unto him. And it concerns us the rather to make this enquiry, because the Providences of God for some time have been, and still are considerable towards us: and the Providences of God seem to be near some period. Some great work or other God seems to have upon the Wheel in the Christian world; which e're long may possibly be brought to light. And such times of

God's

God's remarkable working, are uſually trying, and ſhaking times. To be ſure, it is a bleſſed thing at ſuch a time to be in Chriſt his favour, and under his wing.

In the proſecution of this Uſe there are two things to be enquired into. 1. Whether Chriſt have not, and do not at this day eminently knock and call. 2. What entertainment Chriſt findes, and what anſwer we have made.

1. Let us enquire whether Chriſt have not, and do not at this day eminently knock and call. Is not the *voice of our beloved* to be heard at the doors of our Hearts, ſaying, *Open to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night?* We have told you in the opening of the Doctrine, that though there be no paſſage of God's providence exerciſed towards us, but it hath ſomething of a call from Chriſt in it: yet there are ſome ſpecial times, wherein Jeſus Chriſt doth in a more eſpecial manner knock and call, requiring entrance and admiſſion. How we might know thoſe times, I have endeavoured there to ſhew. It is not my buſineſs here to aſſigne new times of Chriſt's eminent calling, but by reflecting upon thoſe, to make enquiry whether the caſe be not ours: And whether, according to

thoſe

those signes and marks of an eminent call, Christ do not at this day eminently knock and call upon us to open unto him. What I have to say upon this head, I shall sum up into these nine or ten Queries: And by them we may come to understand how the case stands with us.

1. Hath not Christ of late days eminently called, and at this day doth eminently call by his Mercies? The more largely God's hand is opened in Mercies and Bounty unto a person or people, the more loud is his call to them to open to him in a way of duty. God expects from us according to the *Talents* which he bestows upon us. If he bestow *five*, he expects that we should *gain other five*. In bestowing of Mercies, God doth not desiredly cast them away, but expects that he should be served with his own. The more he loads us with blessings and benefits, the more reasonably may he expect that we should abound in duty. The more of any good thing that God bestows, the more good he looks that they should do with it. The Psalmist makes use of God's bountiful dealing to be an argument to his *Soul* to *return unto his rest*, Psal. 116. 7. Christ is the rest of the Soul, as well as he that gives rest unto the Soul, *Matth.* 11. 28. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*,

den, and ye ſhall finde reſt unto your ſouls. that ye ſhall finde reſt in me, as well as reſt by me. *For in me ye ſhall have peace,* John 16. 33. And if this be an argument to return to our reſt, becauſe God hath dealt bountifully with us, ſurely Chriſt calls loud to us, to return to our reſt. His bountiful dealing towards us, of late time, and at this day, is eminent and remarkable: For he hath *compaſſed us about with his mercies,* and *loaden us with his bleſſings and benefits.* The great Peace, the abundant Plenty that God affords, are very conſiderable, if we conſider the broils that are abroad in the world, and the ſcarcity that hath ſo lately threatned us. How hath God prevented our fears! been better to us than our hopes! done great and wonderful things for us beyond expectation! We may not unfitly apply that ſaying of *Moſes* to our ſelves in reſpect of God's providential care over us, and kindneſs to us, *Deut.* 11. 11, 12. *The land whither ye go to poſſeſs it is —— a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year.* Gods goodneſs in this reſpect hath been wonderful, even to admiration, eſpecially if we conſider the uſe that we have made of all theſe mercies; which hath been no better than what

God

God complains of *Israel*, that they made of h
mercies, *Deut.* 32. 15. *But Jeſurun waxed fa*
and kicked— Then he forſook God that made hi
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particular mercies which every one of us i
particular have received, we ſhall finde tha
they have not been inconſiderable, but remar
kable. Have we not at one time or othe
met with conſiderable preſervations, prote
ctions, ſucceſſes in our undertakings, when
it hath fared far otherwiſe with our neigh
bours? Have not every one our particula
mercies to take notice of? as health, when
others have been ſick; life, when others have
been cut off out of the Land of the Living
Liberty, when others have been under re
ſtraint: Preſervations from dangers which
we have been obnoxious unto: Deliverance
out of evils into which we have fallen. It
were endleſs to enumerate the various ways
wherein and whereby God hath been eminent
ly good and gracious unto us. But if we
will

will but ſeriouſly reflect upon Gods bounties toward us, we may be able to give a better account of them, than any other perſon can dictate to us. Yea, we may obſerve more heightening circumſtances in them than others can. For many times the circumſtances of time and place, and our preſent conditions, do wonderfully exalt and magnifie mercies. May one ſay, I was ſick, and in danger of death, when others did die; in what a condition had I been, if I had died then! very unprepared for death and another world: had never ſeriouſly *conſidered my latter end*; had got no aſſurance of Heaven, nor indeed taken much pains about it. If I had gone then, I know not whither I muſt have gone, nor what muſt have become of me. May another ſay, My houſe and family were preſerved, when my neighbours was conſumed in unmerciful flames. If ſuch a thing had befallen me at that time, (in all probability) I had been ruined in mine outward eſtate, and my ſelf and family expoſed to the mercy of others. May another ſay, I was in ſuch and ſuch a diſtreſs and affliction, and ſo involved therein, that I could ſee no way of eſcaping; but the time of my neceſſity was God's opportunity, and *When I ſaid my foot ſlippeth, then the Lord he held me up*: when I was at a loſs in my

my self, *Had viewed and looked on the right hand and left, and could see no help nor hope, then the Lord put under everlasting arms, and saved me.* These and such like circumstances make mercies to be eminent, when they are guided by an unseen hand beyond expectation: the more signal and eminent these mercies are, and the more of the special providential hand of God that may be seen in them, the more loud are the knocks and calls upon us to duty, and to answer Gods end in them. And which of us can say but in the course of our lives we have met with such as these, many and many a time? if so, they have been calls from Christ; and the more eminent they have been, the more loud hath been the call.

2. Hath not God loudly called by his Judgments? Judgments upon others round about us, which have loudly called upon us *to hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly, lest a worse thing happen unto us.* Have we not seen or heard of some that have been taken away in a very terrible manner, in the very act of sinning, and (possibly) we as guilty of such-like sin, as they? How may this make us to tremble, and be a warning unto us! Hath not the hand of God reached us in our persons, relations, estates, houses, trades, callings, and the like? And these have not only been com-

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mon ordinary Providences, but we might in them see something eminently of the finger of God pointing at us? Some aggravating circumstances or other have made them more remarkable to us, than otherwise they would have been. It may be, consider them in themselves, they have only been common calamities, as Letters come to the Town by the hand of the common Post, or Carrier: but they have been directed to them with some particular message, and have intimated so much to thee, by the circumstances of them; this hath been a special call to thee from Christ. And doubtless, we have most of us had such calls as these, if we have but observed and taken notice of them; and if we have not, the greater hath been our fault and our sin. If we do but look through the Nation, as the Mercies have been great that God hath undeservedly bestowed upon us, so the Judgments that have befallen us, have not only been various, but very remarkable, such as the hand of God hath been eminently seen in, howsoever they have been handed to us by wicked instruments. I need not to enumerate them, they are obvious to every observant eye. But what do these intimate and call for from us? Surely the *rod* of God hath a *voice*, and he that *doth not willingly grieve* and afflict *the children of men*, doth not these

things to us, but there is considerable cause for it. When God dealt so with his people of old, we may read what cause God had for it. And certain I am, that the blindest among us cannot but see cause enough, from the hand of God, for all that is come upon us. Only here is the misery, that every one seeks to excuse himself, and to lay the blame at some ones door else: and so takes no notice of Gods particular call to him. I would desire here to set before you, and desire the serious Reader to peruse Gods threatnings to *Israel* of old, and the causes there assigned, and see how far they may concern us: read *Deuteronom.* 28. 15. to the end. And as for those that would lay the blame upon others, and excuse themselves, I shall only recommend to them that dreadful caution and intimation of Gods minde, *Deut.* 29. 18, 19, 20. It is but too common among us to promise our selves *peace*, and drink away our fears; but this will prove in the end, an unpardonable aggravation of our sin. If we would but take the pains to search the Scriptures, and take a view of such Judgments as God hath inflicted upon Nations, Families and Persons, and consider the sins that have been the procuring cause of them, for which they have been sent; we should need no Prophet to read us our destiny;

ſiny, nor any Expoſitor to ſhew us the ſins that God points at in the evils which we labour under; nor ſhould we, any of us, finde cauſe to excuſe our ſelves. Sure I am, the voice of God in his Judgments is eminent; and by the circuits of them, in that they meet with one ſort of men after another, and ſpare few or none, they plainly ſhew the cauſe to be general. And by the complication of them, and their ſurrounding of us, and hemming us in on every hand, they manifeſt the greater diſpleaſure, and more unavoidable danger hanging over our heads: and therefore the voice and call is very loud, and muſt either be quickly hearkned to, or elſe Chriſt may withdraw, the *decree* may *bring forth*, and *there will be no remedy*. I would ſeriouſly recommend to your peruſal, that one dreadful Chapter, *Iſai.* 24, and deſire that your thoughts and meditations may dwell a little upon every verſe, as you go along, and you will not need me to direct you how to apply it; our preſent conditions, and the paſſages of Gods Providence will ſufficiently exemplifie it. And therefore aſſuredly, the call of God is ſomewhat more than ordinary at this day: and none of us can ſay, but that God ſpeaks ſomething more than ordinary unto us. And now, that they which think themſelves leaſt

concerned in this call, may come to finde themſelves moſt concerned at laſt. I will direct ſuch to one Text of Scripture, which calls for their ſerious obſervation, *Iſai.* 28. throughout. When God's *Judgements* come for ſin, our *Refuge of lies*, and *Covenant with Death and Hell*, will but little avail us. But I paſs from this, which is ſufficiently evident to be a loud call from Chriſt, to a

3. Particular, by way of enquiry. Doth not God eminently call, by the great liberty and plenty of the Goſpel, which undeſervedly to this day we do enjoy? There is a notable ſaying, *Pſal.* 147. 19, 20. *He hath ſhewed his word to* Jacob, *his ſtatutes and his judgements to* Iſrael: *he hath not dealt ſo with any nation*, &c. And may not I apply this very pertinently to theſe Nations? for what Nation under Heaven hath enjoyed the Goſpel more plentifully, more plainly, more clearly, and for a longer time, than we have done? The doctrine of the Goſpel hath not been more clearly taught in any Nation under Heaven, than in this our Britiſh Iſland. No Nation hath had more eminently *burning* and *ſhining lights*: and many we enjoy at this day. Never Nation was better inſtructed in the minde and will of Chriſt; (if we do not wilfully ſhut our eyes againſt this light) ſo that other Nations

tions are glad of the *crums that fall from our table*; insomuch that we may truely say with the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 4. 3, 4. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the mindes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* And doth Christ thus stand knocking and calling to this day? surely his long patience hath made his call the louder, and to be the same with that, *Psal.* 95. 7, 8. *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*: especially considering how emphatically, and (to our case) pertinently the Apostle applies it, *Heb.* 4. 7. *Again he limiteth a certain day, saying in* David, *To day, after so long a time, as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand*; it becomes not us then (who have slighted Christs call so long, and at whose door he hath waited so patiently) to linger any longer, but speedily to arise, and open to him, lest (his patience being worn out) he should depart in a discontent.

4. Doth not God at this day quicken his Ministers by his Spirit? and make his Embassadors in a more than ordinary manner, importunate with us to open to Christ? Do not the faithful Ministers of Christ (laying aside all circumstantial

ſtantial and leſſer matters) bend themſelves chiefly, if not onely and wholly, to the main work of calling home ſinners unto Chriſt; and to all to *open*, and open more fully, and truely, and cordially to Chriſt? Is there not a more than ordinary *Spirit* reſting upon *the Prophets*, quickning and exciting them to this work; inſomuch, that they are very urgent and importunate, and will take no denial, no excuſe from ſinners? but *cry* and *cry aloud*, call and call again, We *beſeech you in the name of Chriſt* to open to him, and *be ye reconciled to God?* Doth not God make Miniſters more warm, more zealous, more importunate in their work? So that (notwithſtanding all the diſcouragements they meet with, and the repulſes which you give) they will take no denial, but renew their ſuit? And if one ſubject will not work, they take another? if one argument will not prevail, they make uſe of another? leave no ſtone, no ſubject, unturned, unſpoken to, that they can imagine may prevail with you? What beſpeaks all this earneſtneſs and induſtry, but that Chriſt calls now in good earneſt upon you? for we are able to *do nothing without him.* It is he that directs us to our ſubjects, and puts a word into our mouths. It is he that enlargeth our meditations, bleſſeth our ſtudies, and warmeth

eth the word upon our hearts. It is he that toucheth our Lips with a Coal from his Altar, and helps us to deliver our meſſage *in the evidence and demonſtration of the truth, and of power.* And all this is for your ſakes, that the call might be more convincing and effectual upon you. And therefore if you finde a more than ordinary ſpirit upon the Prophets at this day, you may conclude it is a more than ordinary call. And therefore apply that to your ſelves which the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Acts* 17. 30. However Chriſt might *wink at former ignorance*, or neglect, *yet now* (by way of eminency) *he commands every man every where to repent.*

5. Doth not Chriſt eminently knock and call at the door of thy heart, by ſecret impulſes of his Spirit, and convictions of thy own Conſcience? Doth not the word of God ſometimes come within thy boſome, and not onely prove a general word ſpoken to all, but brings ſome ſpecial meſſage to thee, and ſaith to thee as *Nathan* did to *David*, *Thou art the man*; or as Wiſdom to the ſimple ones, *Prov.* 1. 22, 23. *How long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity, and the ſcorners delight in ſcorning, and fools hate knowledge? turn ye at my reproof*, &c. May we not ſay that God is not wholly departed out of his Ordinances? but

that yet *he walks in the midst of his Golden Candlesticks?* that his *Spirit* is yet *striving* with us? and that yet he hath *compassion of his heritage?* and is loth to *leave his dwelling-place?* Is there not now and then a secret word whispered in your ear, that this word comes from Heaven, and is sent a particular message to you? Are not you ready to think within your selves sometimes, How comes the Minister to know my case so particularly, and to speak to those things that none knows, but God and mine own Conscience? Why, you must know, that this is God that speaks to you by us. It is he that sends us unto you, and puts words in our mouths, and tells us what to say to you: He who knows the secrets of all Hearts: directs us what to speak; and he by his Spirit opens your ear to hear, and to take notice of what is spoken. And he by his Spirit convinceth your Consciences that you are the persons to whom it is spoken. And therefore when it is thus with you, you may assuredly know that this a special knock and call from Christ. May there not be the same inward working in your Hearts, while this word is sounding in your ears, or represented to your eyes in reading of it, that was in the Disciples going to *Emaus*, while Christ talked with them and opened the Scriptures, *Luke* 24. 32. *Did*

not

not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us? &c. Have you not ſome ſecret motions, gripings, and prickings at the heart, under this or other ordinance? this is the voice of Chriſt, ſaying, *Open to me*, &c. and the more ſenſible and piercing theſe are, the more loud is Chriſt's call.

6. Are there no fears upon the hearts of God's people, leſt Chriſt his ſtay at our doors ſhould not be long? Are there no ſignes and ſymptomes of Chriſt's wearineſs and readineſs *to depart*, ſeen and taken notice of? Is there not a general fear upon the Spirits of moſt men, leſt the Goſpel ſhould be ready to be removed? what ground and cauſe men have for thoſe fears from ſecond cauſes, I ſay nothing; but that there is ſuch a fear (however it comes to paſs, or what it is grounded upon) is evident: and I am ſure this cannot be without the hand of God. This fear is an evil of affliction, it diſquiets and troubles the ſpirits of men; and therefore muſt needs proceed from the hand of God. For the Prophet tells us, *Amos* 3. 6. *That there is no evil in the City but the Lord doth it.* This negative interrogation being a more vehement affirmation. And if Chriſt ſhould not wholly depart, and take away his Goſpel, yet his particular calls by inward convictions and ſtrivings of his Spirit,

may not last long; as he gives you a day, so he will give you but a day; and then he *will swear in his wrath that ye shall never enter into his rest.* How much of this day may be spent, you may better guess than any one can tell you, knowing how long he hath called and waited: how clear and full convictions have been, and how they are now: how hot the Gospel hath shined, and how cool it is now; and the shadows of the evening stretched out. And if this be gone, what will it advantage you to have the Gospel continued? It will be but for your hardening, and the sealing you up to everlasting destruction. *Isaiah* was a powerful Preacher, and yet you see what a message God sent him to *Israel*, *Isai.* 6. 9, 10. It is a very uncomfortable message to a faithful Minister of Christ, to be sent upon this errand; but yet it is the message that God sends them to many an one with: and if this be our message to you, it will be sad. However, we must go what message our Master sends us; and if it be sad to us, it will be ten thousand times more dreadful to you. Only our earnest desire is, that you *might know, at least, in this your day, the things that belong to your everlasting peace, before they be hidden from your eyes.* And these general fears are a loud call to delay or linger no longer, but open to Christ.

7. Are

7. Are not all these Calls, by Gospel-Ordinances, in answer to your Prayers? Here I speak to you that do pray: For I am not ignorant, that there are a generation of prayerless souls in the world, and I wish they were not so great a number. There are but too many *Families that call not upon the name of God*: which the Prophet prayes that God would *pour his wrath upon*, Jer. 10. 25. and dreadful will the wrath of God be when it comes. But I speak here to those that do pray. Hath it not been your Prayer, that God would *return into his resting place, he, and the ark of his strength?* Have not you prayed, *Arise, O north-winde, and come thou south, and breath upon my garden? Let my beloved come into his garden.* Have not you prayed, that you might see and meet with *God, as sometimes you have done in his Sanctuary?* That you might *sit down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit might be pleasant to your taste?* Have not you sighed and breathed out your requests to Christ, saying, *Tell me, Oh thou whom my soul loveth! where thou feedest, and where thou causest thy flocks to rest at noon?* &c. Oh that I might enjoy powerful Ordinances! and meet with the power and presence of Christ in them! that *mine eyes might see my teachers, and mine ears hear a voice behind me, saying,*

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This is the way, walk in it! Such-like Prayers as these you have been ever and anon putting up; and in answer to these your Prayers, Christ is come, and stands knocking and calling, *Open to me, my Sister, my Love, my Dove,* and *my undefiled.* Those calls of Christ, which are according to your real desires, and in answer to your Prayers, must needs be eminent and remarkable.

8. Are not you the professed Spouse of Christ, that have professedly given up your selves by a solemn Marriage-Covenant unto Christ; engaged and swore that you will be his, and at his service? What deeper obligation can you lay upon your selves, than you have done? In your Baptism and renewed covenanting at the Lords Table, and by solemn Vows and Covenants upon several occasions: So that none in the world can be more solemnly engaged to open to Christ than you are. And in regard you expect his coming every hour, doth it not stand you upon, to be always upon your *Watch-tower, waiting when your Lord will come, that you may presently open to him?* And now when he both knocks and calls, is not this a sufficient summons to you, to open and let him in? Every call of an Husband (especially such an one as Christ is) should have so much weight in it, as to com-

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mand the obedience of the Wife. And therefore (if not to others, yet) to you, this call should be sufficiently eminent and remarkable; or else your Husband may charge you with disloyalty and breach of covenant.

9. Did ever Christ use more earnest intreaties, and sweet compellations, than he doth it this day? Doth he not say (as to the Spouse) *Open to me, my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my undefiled?* Do not the sweet expressions of his love, in suffering, bleeding, dying for you, speak thus much? Doth not the sweet voice, and loving intreaties of Christ by his Word and Messengers, speak this language? Doth not his constant care about you, and providential kindness unto you, in every respect, and according to what your hearts could wish, bespeak you in this loving manner? Do not all these say that Christ speaks like a most sweet, loving, tender, and kind-hearted Husband to you? *Open to me, my Sister*, &c. and surely these *soft words might break the bone*, and force open the doors of our heart, without any delay. I am sure Christ hath manifested as much love, and dealt with as much tenderness towards us, as ever he did towards a people. And therefore his calls are loud enough to be heard.

10. If

10. Is not *his head filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night?*

If we take these words in a good sense, that he comes fully fraught and furnished with all fulness and plenitude of blessings and benefits that our Souls can desire, or stand in need of; I appeal to any of your souls that ever did open to, and let in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether ever you found any want in him, or were streightned in him? whether he brought not more comfort and benefit with him, than ever you were able to contain, though you opened your mouths never so wide? Hath he not fully answered, and over-answered your most enlarged expectations? so that you might have *eaten and drunken* far more *abundantly*, if you had been able to contain it? Every hair of his head hath a *drop* of some kinde of refreshment hanging at it, which you might be welcome to. And therefore his call is loud enough, when he tells you what he hath brought with him.

But take the argument in a bad sense, for the sufferings and afflictions of Christ; and they are a loud call. Hath not Christ suffered enough in his humiliation, in making way to receive you into favour with God, and into covenant with himself; but you must put him to new pain and trouble, by making him to

stand

and waiting, and dancing attendance at your door, while you are ſnorting and ſtretching your ſelf upon your bed of eaſe and ſecurity? Was not his once offering up himſelf a ſacrifice for ſin, ſufficient, but you muſt *crucifie him afreſh*, and put him to new pain, by your ſlothful and ſluggiſh delays, and unreaſonable excuſes? Doth not Chriſt ſuffer enough in his Name and Honour from wicked blaſphemous wretches, who rend and tear his very Name, wilfully reject him, and will not have this man to rule over them; but muſt he alſo be ſlighted and undervalued by you? muſt he ſuffer in his Miniſters by the revilings, evil-ſpeakings, and perſecutions that they endure in and from the world? and is not this ſufficient, but their Hearts alſo muſt be made ſad by your refuſal to open to Chriſt? The weight of this Argument makes this call to be very loud, and eſpecially at this day, under the circumſtances that we now are. And therefore I deſire it may be ſeriouſly conſidered.

By theſe enquiries we may ſee, that the call of Chriſt at this day is very eminent and remarkable; and therefore it concerns us to enquire, what anſwer we make to this call; whether we have done, and really do open to this call, or no: which is the

2. Enquiry which we propoſed to make:

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and I beſeech you let us be ſerious in it. It is a matter that greatly concerns us, ſince Chriſt his calls are ſo eminent, and his ſtay hath been ſo long at the door of our Hearts. What anſwer have we made to the calls of Chriſt? have we heartily, ſincerely, and readily *opened the doors* of our Hearts, *that the King of glory might enter in?* But alas! if we deal faithfully in the examination of our own Hearts, and in the account which we give in this caſe, it is to be feared, that Chriſt hath had no better (if ſo good) an anſwer from us, than he had here from his Spouſe: As will appear, if our hearts make but true and faithful anſwer to theſe following Queries.

1. If we have truely opened to Chriſt, how comes it to paſs that convictions are ſo ineffectual and fruitleſs as they are at this day? We finde in the courſe of our Miniſtry the word of God ſometimes working by way of conviction. Perſons are convinced by the word that they are the perſons ſo and ſo guilty, are a little ſtartled and affrighted; are pricked at the heart, their Conſciences ſmite them, and tell them as *Nathan* did *David*, *Thou art the man*, to whom this reproof comes, that art thus and thus guilty of ſin, art in a ſtate of nature and unregeneracy, *in the gall of bitterneſs and bonds of iniquity*; and that if thou dieſt

dieſt in this eſtate, thou art undone for ever: That there is no way, or courſe left to avoid this, but by opening to Jeſus Chriſt, *repenting* of, and *forſaking* thy ſin, *turning to God with all the heart*, and taking up a new courſe of life. Fleeing unto Chriſt alone for juſtification, in a ſenſe of thine own utter unworthyneſs. Entering into covenant with him, taking him for thy Prophet, Prieſt, and King; giving up thy ſelf unto him, in all humble, hearty, and ſincere ſubmiſſion to his will, and obedience to all his commands. This the word dictates, and Conſcience ſets in with it, and ſeconds it: And to make up the conviction more full, the Spirit of God comes in, and tells thee, that this condition thou art in, is not to be reſted in, thou muſt either *turn*, or *die*: *To day if thou wilt hear the voice of God, then harden not thy heart*; ere long it will be too late, thy Sun will be ſet, thy day of grace over, and theſe things will *be hid from thine eyes*. Hereupon thy Conſcience is ſtartled, and thou beginneſt to think with thy ſelf what thou muſt do; and (it may be) haſt ſome ſudden earneſt motions, purpoſes, and reſolutions to turn, and to break off from thine old ways and courſes, to become a new creature. But alas! how ſuddenly are all theſe vaniſhed and gone again, and thou fal-

leſt

left fast asleep again in security? Convictions wear off, Affections cool, Fears abate, Sin looks not so terrible, thine own estate and condition not so dreadful and hopeless, Death not so near, the flames of Hell not so hot and scorching; and so the hook is laid aside and left undone, and thou *returnest with the dog to the vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* Or, (at most, if these continue still) thou goest with an inward griping wounded Conscience, and dost not really come out of thy self, unto Christ, for healing. Christ is little store set by, or sought after, but thou patchest up a Plaister for thy wounded Conscience of some pitiful, poor, and imperfect righteousness of thine own, takest up some small formal Profession of Religion: and thus stoppest the clamours of thy Conscience, and Christ is shut out, and stands without still.

Nay, may I not say of some, that instead of *opening* to Christ, they are hardned in their sins, and grown Sermon-proof? the Word of God affects them not, takes not hold upon them, as sometimes it hath done; but they with less pain and torture of Conscience can turn off reproofs than formerly they could have done, and sit more quietly and undisturbedly under Ordinances: and that not because they are in a better condition than formerly,

(for

(for they are the same both in heart and life that they were before) but because their hearts are more hardened, and their consciences more brawny, and their souls more sluggish and senseless than they were before. Is this thy opening to Christ? Is this the entertainment which Christ finds, when *his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night?* Oh consider this before it be too late, before Christ be withdrawn and gone! We have a sad complaint which God makes against *Ephraim*, Hos. 6. 4, &c. *O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? — For your goodness is as a morning-cloud, and as an early dew it passeth away.* A morning-Cloud seems to promise rain, but as the Sun ariseth it vanisheth away; an early Dew seems to moisten and refresh the earth, but when the Sun comes to be hot, the dew is quickly gone, and the grass scorcheth so much the more; so was their goodness very vanishing and unconstant. They seemed to take notice of Gods words, to be affected with them, and to promise and purpose amendment; but alas, their promises and purposes quickly vanished and came to nothing, according to what you finde Psal. 78. 34,35,36,37. Hath it not been too much your case? Under convictions you have seemed to promise God fair things, and there

hath been some hopes of your conversion and change? But no sooner hath the heat of conviction been over, but all these things have quickly vanished away, and come to nothing. Is this the entertainment that Christ hath found? Blame him not then, if he depart, and make you seek him before you finde him.

But further; since it is the Spouse of Christ that is here spoken of, let me carry on this Query about Conviction a little further: You who really are Believers, and have entred into covenant with Christ, and stand in a Covenant-relation to Christ? Have you *opened* to the calls of Christ? Hath there not been many strong convictions upon your spirits in many particular cases, wherein you have been faulty, and your *Consciences* have *smitten* you? and yet for all this, you have stifled these convictions, and have not opened to Christ: you have many times been convinced of your Pride, Worldly-mindedness, Vanity and Unsavorines, Sloath, and Luke-warmness, Backwardness to Duty, Deadness in Duty, Unbelief, and distrust of God, and of his Care and Providence, and such like things; and yet your hearts have not been willing fully to *open* to Christ in these things, and to let conviction have its perfect work in order to your reformation: you have heard the Word, and

known your ſelves to be guilty of ſuch things as the Word hath reproved; Conſcience hath ſpoken, and the Spirit of God hath ſpoken, and yet you have not hearkned to the counſel and dictates thereof, but have turned a deaf ear, and gone on in your ſin ſtill. Is this your opening to him who is *the wonderful Counſellor*, who is *your Lord and Husband*, and whoſe commands ſhould have influence upon you? Oh my friends! we may all ſadly complain, that in this reſpect we have all of us made excuſes, and kept Chriſt out of our hearts.

2. If the door be not ſhut againſt Chriſt, how comes it to paſs that the Ordinances of Chriſt are ſo little prized, ſo little ſtore ſet by at this day? We told you in the opening of the Doctrine, that one way of Chriſt his calling was by his Ordinances. In and by them he convinceth of and reproveth ſin; directs to, and encourageth unto duty; communicates grace, affords his company, gives in nouriſhment, refreſhment, ſtrength, and comfort unto the hungry panting Soul. Theſe are the *Wells of Salvation*, and *Waters of the Sanctuary*, that are for *the refreſhing the City of our God*. Where theſe therefore are ſlighted, Chriſt muſt neceſſarily be ſhut out, and not opened to. We have the Spouſe, *Cant.* 1. 7, 8. inquiring *where ſhe may meet her beloved*. And

he tells her, she may finde him in his Ordinances, and in the assembly of his Saints: there he *records his Name*, and there he *meets his people and blesseth them.* And therefore they that carelesly turn their backs upon the Ordinances of Christ, turn their backs upon, and shut the door of their Hearts against him. Persons may, and often do, frequent the Ordinances of Christ, and yet keep the door of their Hearts fast shut against Christ: But they are utterly out of the way of opening to Christ, yea, out of the ordinary way of Christs call, that turn their backs upon his Ordinances. Greater contempt cannot persons pour upon Christ, than to despise and set light by the Ordinances of Christ, which he hath instituted as means for the enjoyment of him. And if this be so, how ordinarily is Christ shut out! We complain of the deadness of Trade, and what a low rate all kinde of commodities carry; but I am sure Christ's trade is very low; the commodities which Christ offers in the market of his Ordinances (though very rich and costly in themselves, yet) are at a very low rate in the esteem of most men. O how slight an occasion will keep persons back from the Ordinances of Christ! If any worldly business be to be done, persons think it unreasonable to be moved to leave that, and

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to attend the Ordinances of Christ; as the Spouse here thought it unreasonable to move her to leave her warm bed, to come to open to Christ. O how many will rise more early, travel further, and take more pains for an earthly bargain, than to meet with Christ in his Ordinances! these must onely be attended at leisure-times, when men have nothing else to do. If the Ordinances of Christ lose men an hour in their shops, or a single bargain (if but to the value of a shilling) in their trades, they think Christ bids them lose, if he move them to leave their worldly business and attend upon him. Many value Christ and his company at a lower rate than *thirty pieces*. Some (again) can spare time to attend Ordinances, but if it must cost them any thing, these Ordinances must be forborn. In many places, and with many persons, he is the best Minister that will be hired at the cheapest rate, though his preaching be little to the purpose; though he seldom disturb them with any considerable calls from Christ. Others, though they do frequent Ordinances, yet, not as the Ordinances of Christ, which binde Conscience, but as indifferent things, that may be done, or left undone, without any guilt or blame: And therefore they make little matter of rushing out of the world and worldly

buſineſs into an Ordinance, altogether unprepared, and uncompoſed, but their thoughts and hearts are full of the world as may be: and as little matter of running into the world again ſo ſoon as ever the Ordinance is ended, without allowing themſelves the leaſt time to meditate, or beg God's bleſſing upon what they have been partakers of. Is this your opening to Chriſt at his call? I am very confident this is not the leaſt reaſon of perſons unfruitfulneſs under Ordinances at this day, becauſe the Ordinances are not conſcientiouſly attended. Nor do perſons allow themſelves time in meditation and prayer that the Ordinance might have its ſoaking influence upon them. By this means, Sirs, you do too ordinarily, if not conſtantly, ſhut out Chriſt. This low eſteem that the Ordinances of Chriſt have among us, doth ſufficiently manifeſt that our hearts are not rightly open to Chriſt. It was far otherwiſe with the Spouſe, *Cant.* 2. 3. She *ſate down under his ſhadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleaſant to her taſte.* But theſe have ſcarce time, and leſs mindes to ſit down at all, but are in a running poſture, as if Chriſt's bounties were not worth the ſtaying for.

3. If the heart be open to Chriſt, whence is it, that perſons are ſo cold, formal, and indifferent,

different, both in their profeſſion, practices and performances? Surely if Chriſt were let in, the heart would be more warm and lively, Grace would be more active in us than it is at this day. We read, *Cantic.* 5. 5. that when Chriſt *put* but *in his finger by the hole of the door*, though the door was not fully opened to him, yet he left ſuch a warming, perfuming vertue behind him, as ſet the Spouſe her Graces afloat; ſhe can reſt no longer in her bed, but *ariſeth*, her bowels yern towards him; and before ſhe get the door open, her *fingers drop with myrrhe*; there will be a ſenſible alteration of the humours (to ſpeak ſo) a change of the frame and diſpoſition of Grace in the heart where Chriſt comes, and meets with ready entertainment. The Souls ſleepy fit will be over when Chriſt comes in, and her Graces will fall to their work; Faith will be ſtrongly active, Love will be inflamed, Thankfulneſs will be increaſed, Obedience will be more exact, and univerſal Repentance more deep and ſerious, the heart wholly and zealouſly engaged for Chriſt, when the door of the heart is truely opened to Chriſt. But oh, how far otherwiſe is it with us! ſomething of the carcaſs of Religion, and the form of Godlineſs, an external profeſſion of the Name of Chriſt is left; but little of the life, and zeal,

and warmth and power of Religion left! In former days, when Christ was eminently seen in his Ordinances, and Believers hearts were more freely and fully open to him, we see what holy, heavenly, zealous, universally circumspect Christians were then to be found; what wonderful works did manifest themselves in them, and were done by them. But where have we almost any Christians of the old stamp and strain left! Now adays we have much talking of Religion; but little holy, strict, and exemplary walking in the ways of God, in all holy Conversation and Godliness. Sure I am, there is a vast difference between Christians in former days, and those that now live. Then they were *humble, holy, blameless in all manner of conversation, zealous for Gods glory*, lively, spiritual and heavenly in their Duties, *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*, fervent in love towards God and the Brethren, and that not in word only, but in deed and in truth: such as might easily be distinguished from the generality of the world. But now, how many professors of Religion are there, who are *Proud, covetous, sensual, compliers with the fashions and customes of the world, envious, malicious, backbiters, slanderers, having only a form of godliness*, very curious about circumstances, very careless about the substance and practical

practical part of Religion? This shews, that though we carry the name of Christ in our foreheads, yet Jesus Christ is too much kept out of our hearts.

4. If the heart be open to Christ, how comes it to pass that the world hath so great a share and interest there? Surely where Christ comes, he gains the heart, and the whole bent of the Soul is after him: Nothing more earnestly desired, or diligently sought for than Christ. *Rachels* language to *Jacob*, upon better grounds, and with far better reason, is the language of a gracious heart to God: *Give me Children or I die.* So saith the Soul, Give me Christ, or I die: I can no longer be without him: I languish and pine away for want of him. If I may have but one wish or request in all the world, it shall be this: That God would bestow Christ upon me, that I may not onely have an interest in him, and title or claim to him; but that I may have his company, and communion with him; may live in the light of his countenance, always *beholding* his most lovely *face*, *hearing his most pleasant voice*, and tasting of his most Royal dainties. The breathings of a gracious heart towards Christ are the same (for reality, though not for degree) that Christ his breathings are towards her, *Cant.* 2. 14. *O my dove*

love!—Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. It was thus with *David*, Psal. 27. 4, &c. If he might but have one request, it should be, that he *might dwell in the house of the Lord*, and that for this end, that he might *behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his Temple*: and whatever became of other things, *this* (as the main) would he *seek after.* But alas! is it not far otherwise with us in these days? and that among those that profess love to Christ! if we look what most men are busie about, what takes up most of their thoughts, what their discourse is most about in all companies, what they spend most time in, and weary themselves in the prosecution of from day to day: shall we not finde it rather to be the World, than Christ? I will not say, (as is said of the wicked) *That God is not in all their thoughts*: but this may be too truely said of many; that their most frequent, pleasant, and abiding thoughts are about the world. These lie down with them; these rise up; these go out and come in with them, as if these were their onely business. Doth this argue that these Hearts are open to Christ? where the door is open, a man may enter in without obstruction: But here it is an hard matter for a serious thought of Christ

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to get crowded in: If it come to the door, it gets no further; hath little or no admission into the heart and affections: no abiding there. We read in Scripture of many very groſs ſins that the ſervants of God (for ſome time) have been overcome by: but I do not remember any (mentioned in Scripture) that were ſincere, that were overcome with the love of the World. *Demas* (indeed) is ſaid to *embrace this preſent World*; but whether this be to be underſtood of his total apoſtacy from the faith, or onely his deſerting his publick work or ſtation, the Scripture leaves us in the dark, and leaves this brand of infamy and diſgrace upon him. We know what the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9, 10. *They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil: which while ſome coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows.* And the Apoſtle *John* tells us, 1 *John* 2. 15. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Evidently manifeſting, that there is not room for Chriſt and the World to dwell in the ſame heart. Chriſt himſelf tells us that we *cannot ſerve God and Mammon.* Theſe two contrary Maſters will be encroaching upon

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on each other, and imposing their contradictory commands. So that from hence I conclude, that where the world hath a great share in the heart and affections, there Christs interest is but small, and the door of our hearts not sufficiently opened to him. I am affraid that at the great day, when all hearts shall be tried and made manifest, there will be many a man found, who prayed for Christ, had a desire of him, yea and hoped that he had an interest in him, and a love for him; and yet through the prevalency of the world, never truely opened his heart to Christ. Examine your hearts therefore how the case stands with you. If Christ be there, and opened to as he should be; how comes his mortal enemy, the world, to have such an interest in you? and to bear so much sway with you? If your hearts were opened to Christ, the world would be more despised, and Christs company would be more delightful, and more store set by.

5. And lastly. If the door of our hearts be open to Christ by faith, How comes it to pass that there are so few fruits of Faith to be seen? There is no question to be made, but where Christ the *Sun of righteousness* shines into the Soul, the door of the heart being opened by Faith, but that it will be Summer-tide with

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that Soul; Grace will *bud, bloſſom, and bear fruit.* And if all other Graces be fruitful, why not Faith? If Faith therefore be fruitful where the Heart is opened to Chriſt, it concerns us to examine what fruits of Faith we finde in our ſelves. For as Faith hath a large root or foundation (having the whole Word of God for its object, upon which it acts, and from which at all times it fetcheth direction) ſo it hath a large office and work in the ſoul; its work being to *purifie both heart* and life. Acts 15. 9. *Purifying their hearts by faith.* Therefore the Apoſtle *James* tells us, that *Faith without works is dead being alone.* I may well compare Faith to a large and frugiferous tree, whoſe root or foundation is the whole Word of God, recorded in the whole body of Scripture. The ground or ſeat of Faith is the heart, (the commanding power of the ſoul) the body or trunk of this tree, is the habit or principle of Faith infuſed into us, and nouriſhed in us by the Spirit of God. The ſeveral branches of this tree ſpreading themſelves every way, are the ſeveral emanations or flowings forth of Faith, guided and directed by the ſeveral parts of Gods word. The fruits of Faith are the ſeveral particular actings of the whole man, guided by Faith according to the direction of Gods Word. Now

where

where the ground of the heart is made warm by the presence and influential beams of the *Sun of righteousness* (being opened unto Christ at his coming) the tree of Faith must needs flourish, and drawing in fresh supply of sap from the rock of truth, which being digested in our hearts by Faith, must needs bring forth suitable and proportionable fruit of all kinds in our lives and conversations. If therefore thy heart be open to Christ by Faith, Where then are the fruits, effects, actings and flowings forth of Faith in all the parts and passages of thy life and conversation? Where is thy dependance upon, and embracing of his Promises, relying upon his All-sufficiency? Where is thy universal obedience to his commands, discharging duty in every part and condition of life, living by and acting according to the rule of Gods Word, in every thing thou goest about, leaving the issue, success and event of all thy business and concerns to God, to his care and faithfulness? Where is thy constant watch against the deceitfulness of thy Heart, the temptations of Satan, the allurements and enticements of the World? and thy faithful resistance of all Temptations? thy deep repentance for, and faithful mortification of all sin, so far as discovered by the Word? Where is thy sincere, cordial, constant

ſtant, univerſal obedience to the Word of God, making that thy Rule in all thine Actions; ſquaring thy whole life and converſation, both in reſpect of God, thy ſelf, and thy Neighbour, according thereunto; giving every Duty, in thy general and particular calling, its due time, place, and reſpect? Not allowing the world to ingroſs to it ſelf what properly and peculiarly belongs to God, his Worſhip and Service; and putting off God with ſuch homage and ſervice as might better fit, and were more proper for our worldly concernments? My meaning is, our inverting, or going (in the courſe of our lives) directly contrary to that command or advice of our Saviour, *Matth. 6. 33. Seek firſt the Kingdom of God and the righteouſneſs thereof, and all other things ſhall be added.* In all that we do in our general and particular places and callings, keeping God and his intereſt above, and preferring it before the world.

If theſe be not the fruits of Faith, wherein thy Soul in ſome meaſure abounds, never tell me that thy heart is rightly and truly open to Chriſt: but according to the meaſure of thy unfruitfulneſs, remains (in meaſure and part at leaſt) ſhut againſt Chriſt, notwithſtanding thy pretences to open to him. How is it with you then, friends? In what poſture do you

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finde your hearts? are they open or shut? It is evident that Christ his calls have been very remarkable; but what entertainment he hath found in your hearts, that is the question that is now put to your Consciences to make answer to. And I beseech you suffer your Consciences to speak, and to speak out what they know and can tell you in this case. Stifle them not, bribe them not, turn not the deaf ear to what they speak: they are God's Deputies within you. And if these condemn you, know that God is greater than your Hearts, and knows all things. You may deceive men, you may deceive your selves; but God you cannot deceive. Christ knows what entertainment he hath found, and he will make you to know it one day also; and therefore deal faithfully with your selves.

And if by these things which we have laid before you, we may try our selves, this may lead many of us (at least) to another work, which may be a

3. *Use*. Here lies before us matter of deep humiliation, that so eminent and remarkable calls of Christ as we have been partakers of, have been so little regarded by us; that Jesus Christ (notwithstanding his earnestness and importunity) hath found such cold and poor entertainment in our hearts to this very day.

But

But this I will not much enlarge upon, because I would keep within some convenient bounds. It is too obvious and apparent to be denied, that notwithstanding our great profession of love to Christ, desire of him, and frequent imploring his company by prayer; we have in too sad and shameful a manner shut him out at his coming, though his calls have been visible and convincing. How may we then tremble to think how this our behaviour will be resented by him! There are many that from what they behold in the world, are astonished at the apprehension of the danger of Christ his withdrawing for a time, if not total departure. But from what usage Christ hath found in our hearts, without looking any further abroad, we may finde sufficient cause of fear and trembling. I am very confident, that by that time all reckonings and accounts be cast up, (if Christ do depart) not the least part of the cause of his departure will be found among his own professing people: such as have *called upon his Name*, cryed after him, and protested themselves earnestly desirous of his company, and yet, when (in answer to their prayers) he hath come, have not heartily and fully opened unto him. Mistake me not, I do not here mean by these persons of whom I am speaking, onely Hypo-

elites, and such as make only an external profession of Religion; (though there be too many of these in the world) but also sincere believers, who have the root of the matter, the truths of grace within them, and shall (notwithstanding all their blemishes) be found at Christs right hand, at the day of Judgement, that yet have too sadly shut out Christ when he hath come and called in answer to their prayers. Think not this impossible; for in my Text it is the *Spouse*, the Bride of Christ, that thus unkindly treated him when he stood at her door. And it is to be feared he hath found no better entertainment from us. What cause then have we to fear and tremble lest Christ should deal with us here as he did with the Spouse! and therefore with all humility and brokenness of heart, to confess and bewail, and (for time to come) resolve against this unworthy, ungrateful, and undutiful behaviour towards our Lord and Husband. But I pass from this to a

4. Use, *viz.* of Exhortation, to beseech you all in the name and fear of God to *open* to the calls and knocks of Christ, laying aside all excuses whatsoever. O! let Christ have your hearts, let him have warm and welcome entertainment there! Do I need here to use Arguments? or summon in the Topicks of

Rheto-

Rhetorick to quicken and perſwade you to embrace this reaſonable motion? or if I ſhould uſe all the arguments I could invent, or that I might collect from the mouths and pens of other men, would theſe be of any force with you, if Chriſt his own words and arguments cannot prevail? can I in this caſe, or any man breathing, ſay more for Chriſt than he can and doth ſpeak for himſelf? And therefore if Chriſt cannot, how ſhall I think to prevail with you? If either friendly compellations, earneſt intreaties, or ſtrong arguments may prevail, none of theſe are wanting in the Text, which I have been endeavouring (according to my power and weak ability) to unfold unto you in this whole Diſcourſe; to which I ſhall refer you, and ſhall not here repeat the ſame things over again; onely beg your ſerious meditation upon them: And conſidering their weight and importance, ſee whether they may not preponderate and outweigh all arguments that your carnal deceitful Hearts, a ſubtile Devil, and an alluring whoriſh World can bring againſt this duty. Onely give me leave in a few words to expoſtulate the caſe a little with you. And here let me ask you

1. How or what manner of lives you think to live without Chriſt, and without his com-

pany in your hearts? Seriously meditate upon this, before you give an answer. Do you think to live to more profit and advantage to your selves without than with Christ? Is Christ no gain and advantage to your Souls? will he bring no profit and advantage with him? is not *his head filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night?* Hath not he the command and dispose of all things? and hath not he promised to *give grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing?* Psa. 84. 11. and doth not he assure us that *he that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all, will also with him give us all things*, that may be good for us? *Rom.* 8. 32. Do you think to live more to your own pleasure, contentment, or comfort? Is it not *in his presence that there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand that there are pleasures for evermore?* Psal. 16. 11. Is it not *in him* alone that the Soul and Conscience can have true *peace* and a calm? and that when nothing but storms and tempests are without? read *John* 16. 33. Tell me who but Christ can put your Soul into *David's* frame of Spirit, when in *David's* condition? *Psal* 63. banished, hunted, persecuted, in the Wilderness, destitute of maintenance, friends, a resting-place, Ordinances; every hour in jeopardy of his life; and yet *his Soul filled as with*

with marrow and fatneſs in the company and enjoyment of God: there could he *ſing and give praiſe*. In ſuch a condition alſo was he when he penned *Pſalm* 57. and yet his *heart was fixed to ſing and give praiſe*. If you think you can live more profitably or more pleaſantly without Chriſt, in worldly and ſinful ways and courſes, let me deſire you to take a view of your time, carriages, and manner of life that that is by paſt: And let me ask you the ſame queſtion that the Apoſtle doth, *Rom. 6. 21. What fruit had you then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed?* This I will aſſure you, that either in reſpect of profit, pleaſure, honour or comfort, no company is like to Chriſts. Oh! therefore let not him ſtand without, while worſe company is entertained in your hearts. What is the reaſon why Chriſtians hearts are ſo full of guilt, doubts, fears, and diſſatisfactions of every kinde? but for want of the company and preſence of Chriſt. If this *Sun of righteouſneſs* did but *with healing under his wings ariſe* upon, and ſhine into our hearts; he would quickly diſpel and ſcatter all thoſe midnight fogs and terrours, that do ſo diſturb and diſquiet us, and render our lives ſo uncomfortable.

2. Suppoſe that you could live well enough without Chriſt, while you live in this world:

Let me ask you what you will do, or how you will make up your accounts at Death and Judgment without him? You know that *It is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment.* You know also, that *we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ:* for *God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ,* Acts 17. 31. and that in that day, *We must give him account of all that we have done in the flesh, whether good or evil,* whether secret or open, whether in thought, word, or deed; there then we cannot avoid the meeting with Christ; how then do you think that Christ the Judge will look upon you, at that day, who have so slightly looked upon him, when he stood knocking at the door of your hearts? Read with seriousness *Prov.* 1. 24. to the end, *Matth.* 25. 11, 12. Oh! the countenance and looks of Christ, which to you now is despicable, (but to the Saints lovely) will to you then be most dreadful and terrible. Then *will you cry to the mountains and hills to fall on you, and to hide you from the presence of the Lord, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who is able to abide it?*

3. Let me further ask you, What is it that hinders you from opening to Christ at present? Is it any thing that hath the colour or face

side of reason in it? If not, why do you suffer it to hinder you? If to have, let us examine it, and see what strength of reason may be in it.

I can but (at present) call to minde these Three great and main hinderances, that keep men off from opening to Christ at his call.

1. The low and mean esteem which persons have of Christ's company, feasts and banquets. The generality of the world are clearly for some sensible good thing: *Who will shew us any good thing?* Psal. 4. 6 Something that may yield them some present advantage, that may advance their estate, their credit, pleasure or honour; something that they may see with their eyes, or handle, or taste, &c. something that is obvious to sense: but as for *invisible things*, an interest in Christ, in the Covenant of Grace, a future reward in another Life, only for the present to be received and apprehended in the promise, these things are little more set by. If Christ would give them of these worldly good things, then they would set more by him. But if he tell them of spiritual Feasts, of a Treasure in Heaven, of a Crown of Glory, and such like things, these are not much taking with the generality of the world. And therefore Christ his Feasts Company and Benefits, being spiritual, are

little ſtore ſet by, by carnal hearts; and when they are called upon to open to him, they make light of it, as not judging him worth the opening to. But that this is a great miſtake, I might eaſily demonſtrate, for we have little reaſon to have ſo low an eſteem and value of Chriſt his Benefits and Banquets, if we do but rightly underſtand our ſelves. We will ſuppoſe a man to have all that the world can afford him, both in reſpect of profit, pleaſure, and honour, and yet want true peace of conſcience, true comfort in his Soul; can theſe things give him this, without Chriſt? But where a Soul hath Chriſt, he may have peace in his own Soul and Conſcience, in the abſence of theſe worldly enjoyments. *David* in a wilderneſs, *Paul* and *Silas* in a dungeon, with their feet faſt in the ſtocks, their ſtripes and wounds unwaſhed, can ſing praiſes to God with a merry and chearful heart. Nay, my Friends! it is impoſſible for me to expreſs that quietneſs and ſerenity of Spirit, that abundant *peace of Conſcience*, *Joy of heart*, contentation and ſatisfaction which a Believer enjoys in the company of and communion with Chriſt: therefore it is called *a Peace which paſſeth all underſtanding*, Phil. 4. 7. It is called *A Joy unſpeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. 1. 8. It is not what a man hath, but what gives true Peace, Satisfaction

and

and contentment to the Soul, that makes a man happy; and this none but Christ can do: And therefore his company and banquets must needs be not so despicable as many men account them. But alas! it is their ignorance, and want of experience; would they but be perswaded to open to Christ, and make trial of the excellency of his company, and rarity of his banquets, they would have a more venerable esteem for Christ than now they have.

2. Another grand hindrance that keeps us off from opening to Christ, is the urgency of other business. When Christ comes and calls, persons are so crowded with other businesses, that they cannot be at leisure to open to him, or give him any entertainment. Men are generally got plunged so deep in the cares and cumbers of the World, that they have no leisure to open to Christ: no nor so much as to weigh the arguments and motives that Christ makes use of to procure admission into their hearts. Oh how busie are men in the world! head and heart, hands and feet; yea whole soul and body as busily exercised about the world as may be; and they think all this little enough too, they think they get little enough by it; and how should these then have leisure to open to Christ? no wonder though

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his calls be so ineffectual, when persons are so deeply ingaged in the world, that they have not leisure to stand still and consider what were best to be done, whether that which they are about, or some other thing. We read in the parable of the Supper, when the Master sends forth his Servants to invite guests, one man is busie with his *Farm*, another with his *Merchandise*; but none of those which were bidden had leisure to come. And the reason was, they saw a present necessity and urgency of the present business which they were about, but they saw none so great and present need of Christ. Many in the world are worse employed than *Martha* was, and yet think their time so well spent in that which they are about, that they are loth to be taken off to wait and attend upon Christ and his Ministry. *Martha* had invited the Lord Jesus to her house, and with him many friends: and that which she was busie about, was, to make ready provision for his entertainment; a business (one would think) indispensible. And yet our Saviour blames her for this, *Luke* 10. 40, 41, 42. *But Martha was cumbered about much serving* —— *And Jesus answered and said, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall*

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not be taken away from her. How many are worſe employed than this! and yet have not leiſure to conſider whether any thing be more neceſſary to be done, than what they are about. To ſuch as theſe I would ſpeak theſe few words. You think your ſelves well employed in your earneſt and hot purſuit of the world, the cares and buſineſs that onely relates to this preſent life, and you ſee nothing more needful at preſent to be done. Let me ask you this queſtion: Notwithſtanding the great buſineſs which you have to do in the world, do you not ſometimes finde leiſure to eat, drink, ſleep, dreſs and adorn the body? You will ſay, Yes, without theſe we could not live, nor have any ſtrength to follow our buſineſs. Well, will time be afforded for taking and feeding upon *the meat that periſheth*, and no time allowed for feeding upon *that meat which endures to everlaſting life?* Read *John* 6. 27. *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endures to everlaſting life.* Hath your Body more need of Clothes to cover your nakedneſs, and keep you warm, than your Souls to be clothed with the Righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt as a Robe or Garment? If you did but as really ſee how naked your Souls look in the ſight of God, Angels, &c. you would be as much aſhamed of your ſelves,

as you would now be to have men see your Body naked. And therefore consider with your selves, whether there be not as great need to take fit and convenient time for the feeding and clothing your Souls, as there is for feeding and clothing your Bodies. And if there be as great need, I pray you let not your precious Souls famish and starve, while you so carefully pamper your Bodies, and that notwithstanding your great and urgent business in the world. Again, you that are so earnest and busie about the world, and have your time and thoughts so taken up about it, let me ask you this one question more: Whether do you judge that your success in your worldly affairs doth principally flow from your own wisdom, care, and pains; or from the blessing of God upon your endeavours? I believe that few or none of you will be so audacioully impious as to affirm the former; (whatever you think) but rather that your successive business doth arise from the blessing of God upon your endeavours. And if so, I pray you to consider upon what ground or warrant you can expect the blessing of God upon your endeavours, when you wilfully shut the door of your Hearts against his well beloved Son? and when you make so light of him and his company, that every worldly trifle must take place of him,

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and be preferred before him? Might not many of you ſucceed better in your worldly buſineſs, if you would give Chriſt better entertainment in your Hearts, and cumber your ſelves leſs about the world? Chriſt bids us, *Matth. 6. 33. Seek firſt the Kingdom of God, and the Righteouſneſs thereof:* and promiſeth that *all other things ſhall be added.* Intimating, that the beſt way to ſecure a competency of this world to our ſelves, is in the firſt and chief place to ſecure an intereſt in Chriſt for our Souls. We ſay, that he that would drive on a Trade, muſt have intereſt and acquaintance. And I am ſure we cannot have intereſt in, nor acquaintance with a better friend than Chriſt; nor one that can beſtead us more in the carrying on of our worldly buſineſs: For *It is the bleſſing of the Lord that makes rich, and addes no ſorrow therewith*, Prov. 10. 22. O ſpare ſome time therefore in the midſt of your worldly buſineſs, to open your hearts to Chriſt.

3. Another hinderance to our opening to Chriſt, may be the difficulty and unpleaſantneſs of the work, either in opening to Chriſt, or when we have opened to him.

1. There is a difficulty in opening to Chriſt, which a lazy ſluggiſh Soul is hardly brought to grapple with and overcome. Faith and Love

Love are the two principal ways whereby the Soul is to open to Christ. And these are two Graces, not without much difficulty attained unto, in the right exercise of them. Many persons, at a distance, think it an easie matter to believe in a crucified Saviour; but when they come to make proof of their Faith in particular cases, they many times finde themselves at a loss. See this in an instance, *Mark* 9. 24. we have a man bringing his child to Christ to be healed; his coming argued something of Faith; but when the Disciples had failed in the cure, and the child was rather worse than better, the mans faith begins to stagger, as appears by his words, vers. 22. *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.* Hereupon Christ calls him to the real exercise of Faith, vers. 23. *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* The poor man upon examination of his own heart, finding some faith, but yet this very weak, and hardly to be raised to a firm and stedfast belief, without wavering or doubting, cries out, *I believe, Lord help thou mine unbelief:* Which manifested his sense of the difficulty of opening to Christ by Faith, as he ought. And truely, Christians that know any thing of their own hearts (as they ought) finde this a very difficult work in cases

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of an easier nature than this, here, of this man was. And therefore a lazy sluggish Soul is unwilling to be at such pains. There are some weary steps that a believer must take to open to Christ by Faith. As (1.) earnest Prayer to him, who is the *Finisher* and *Perfecter*, as well as the *Author* and *Beginner* of this Grace. Faith in the act and exercise, as well as in the habit, must be obtained of Christ by earnest Prayer. And to tug in this duty of Prayer, as we ought, is no easie work, especially if Christ for some time seem to hold back and deny, as he did to the woman of *Canaan*. This puts the Soul sometimes into a sweat, and therefore the easeful Soul is loath to be at this pains; his patience is worn out, and he faints and flags in the duty.

2. Another weary step the Soul must take to get Faith into the exercise, is the searching the Word and Promises, and rightly applying them. It is sometimes difficult to finde such promises as may rightly suit our condition: When we have found them, it may be something more difficult rightly to understand them according to the true intent and purport of them: sometimes it may be difficult to get our hearts rightly affected with them; and most of all, to clear up our interest in them. So that sometimes a Believer finds a promise,

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and meditating sees it to suit his condition well enough; but yet lays it aside, can suck no sweetness from it, because he cannot clear up his interest in it; and that by reason of some particular condition or qualification annexed thereto, which he findes not in himself. In this case to believe seems difficult, and therefore the promise is laid aside, and no comfort gathered from it; upon this account a lazy Soul sits down in unbelief, and doth not open to Christ by faith.

3. Another weary step is, the overcoming that unbelieving frame of heart which we are naturally prone unto. Unbelief is a sin which naturally flows from the corruption of our natures, and accompanies us in some measure, more or less, while we are in this Vale of Tears. And this part of corrupt nature poor Souls finde as much difficulty in the overcoming, as any corruption. And the reason is, because (of all corruptions) none hath more to say for it self than this; for the object of Faith (properly) is unseen things, such as are not obvious to sense, such as seem to thwart both sense and reason, and frequent experience; such things as we have nothing to bottom our faith concerning upon, but the bare Word of God, we are to *believe in hope, contrary to hope*. And this makes the work difficult;

ficulty hereupon few Christians are so resolved and industrious, as to be at the pains which the Psalmist was, *Psal. 73.* to search things to the bottom, and to weigh things in the balance of the Sanctuary, and therefore they sit down without opening to Christ by Faith.

4. Another difficulty is the griping guilt of sin and unworthiness, which so looks them in the face when they should open to Christ by Faith, that the eye of their Faith is dim, and they cannot with any confidence look Christ in the face. It is an usual saying, that a guilty Conscience needs no Accuser. Conscience will inwardly check the adulterous Spouse of Christ, and make her blush when she should open to him and look him in the face. The Psalmist complains, that he was so *compassed* about, and tormented with his sin, that *he could not look up*, Psal. 40. 12. It is a mistake very common in humbled penitent sinners, that they must not, dare not, by Faith open to, and close with Christ, till they have attained such a measure of internal purity and Sanctity as may make them fit for, and (in a sort) worthy of his company. But these begin their work at the wrong end: They should first open to Christ by Faith, and then he will help them to, and carry on in them this

work of purity: For it is his work by his Spirit to purifie, and this purifying vertue we must fetch from him by Faith: for *It is he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, because *without him we can do nothing*. Our work is first to believe, and then by Faith to mortifie the deeds of the flesh. Now this work is difficult, to open to Christ, and look him in the face by Faith, with the guilt of sin upon our Consciences. This goes contrary to the grain of Flesh and Blood, who would gladly have something of its self and its own Righteousness in its justification. Whereas our work is to disclaim all worthyness of our own, and to come to Christ *with Ropes about our Necks*, as self-condemned persons, lying at the foot-stool of pure Grace, and Christs Righteousness for justification and life. And therefore where there remains any measure of pride in the Heart, according to that measure and degree of pride, Christ will be shut out: The weary step of self-denial (in this case) the sluggish Christian is not willing to take.

Thus you see the work it self in opening to Christ by Faith is very difficult, and hence the lazy Christian lies down upon his bed of present ease, and refuseth to be at the pains to open to Christ by Faith. But, would the Soul but consi-

consider the amends that Christ's company would make for all his pains, and how easie all these duties would be made by Christs coming in; surely the Soul would never think his pains better bestowed than in opening to Christ by Faith. It is he that by his Spirit *helps our infirmities* in prayer, and helps us by his own strength to wrestle with himself and prevail. It is he that brings promises to our minde, helps us to understand and rightly to apply them, and to take the sweetness and the comforts of them. It is he that gives us a *Pisgah*-sight of unseen things, and assures our Souls of the certainty of them. It is he that helps our unbelief: And it is he, and he alone, that by his Blood must purge away the guilt of all our sins. Oh! therefore open to Christ by Faith, and let not these impediments hinder you.

And as in Faith, so in opening the Heart to Christ by Love, there is great difficulty; much ado to bring the Heart to open fully to Christ by Love. These worldly things seem so lovely, that the Heart is much stolen away by them! These worldly things are so constantly present with us, that it is hard to get sight of Christ, who is at a distance, and seen (as it were) afar off. These worldly things are so obvious and suitable to sense, (by

which we too much live) that the object of Faith is little notice taken of. To love him therefore, and that with such a love as we ought, *whom we have not seen*, this is very difficult: To open our Hearts and Affections to him that we never saw with our eyes, but onely have heard tell of; this is very difficult, and scarcely attainable by a sluggish Soul, that is unwilling to be at the pains to enquire after him. But let not this hinder, for we have such discoveries of him in the Word, (if we will but be at the pains to search them out) as will render him *altogether lovely*; far more desirable than the most precious thing in the world. And therefore let not sloth hinder us from opening to Christ by love.

2. As there may be difficulty and unpleasantness in opening, so there may be difficult and unpleasant work when we have opened to Christ, and let him in; and the thought of this may make the Soul unwilling to open to Christ. As for instance,

1. Christ at his coming in, may rip up our old sores, and bring our sins to remembrance, which may renew our torment and pain. When Christ comes in, he makes new discoveries in the Soul; many a sin forgotten, and not duly repented of, is brought to minde, and the sting of it wounds and cuts the Soul, puts

puts the Soul to new ſorrow, ſhame, and pain: and this makes the Soul afraid of opening to Chriſt. There is in every one ſuch an indelible ſenſe of the holineſs of Chriſt, and of their own guilt, that (though the Soul may have a real deſire of Chriſts company, yet) is really afraid to let him in, leſt Chriſt ſhould diſcover there what the Soul is afraid to have ſeen. And therefore it argues not onely the ſincerity and truth of Grace, but a conſiderable meaſure of the prevalency of Grace, when the Soul, without inward reluctancy or fearfulneſs, can ſay as *David*, Pſal. 139. 23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.* This is a work wherein the Soul would be tenderly dealt with; and leſt Chriſt (in this caſe) ſhould deal faithfully and roundly, the Soul is afraid to open to Chriſt. Though Reaſon will pray with us to have our Wounds ſearched, yet Nature it ſelf is afraid to have the Surgeon meddle with it. Such is the caſe here; and upon this account many faint-hearted Chriſtians are unwilling to open to Chriſt, but rather ſhut him out.

But, oh my Friends! If this be the reaſon why Chriſt is not readily opened to by you, let me tell you, The longer you keep him out, the worſe it will be with you: your Soul is

ulcerated with ſin, it is not ſound at the bottom; and if Chriſt be not let in at all, you muſt unavoidably periſh of this wretched diſeaſe. And if you do let him in hereafter, he muſt then ſearch it to the bottom, and in the mean time your ſin frets as a canker, eats deeper and deeper into your heart; and will not your pain be the more intolerable, when your wound comes to be ſearched? And therefore let ſpiritual reaſon prevail with you to open to Chriſt, without any more delay. That which here thou makeſt uſe of as a reaſon why thy heart is ſhut againſt Chriſt, ſhould be a ſtrong, yea the ſtrongeſt argument to the contrary, to open to Chriſt quickly. It is infinite Mercy that thou haſt ſo precious a Surgeon at hand. It would be a moſt childiſh thing then to ſhut him out of doors, becauſe thou needeſt his help, but art afraid leſt he ſhould ſee, and rip up thy ſore. This fleſh-pleaſing eaſefulneſs is that which ruines many thouſands.

2. He may call us off from our earneſt purſuit of the world and worldly buſineſs, which is urgent upon us: He may ſay to thee, Come, *follow me*; be not ſo haſty in the purſuit of the world, lay aſide thy buſineſs for a while, I have other buſineſs for thee to do; let me have thy company a little, for, for that end

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am I come. This may be the language of Christ to the soul. But this is very unpleasing unto the Soul, that is hot and earnest in the pursuit of the world; this soul will be ready to answer as the man in the Gospel, *Lord I will follow thee, but suffer me first to go and bury my father*; let me but dispatch such or such a business that is urgent upon me, and then I will wait upon thee. But O Soul! consider with thy self, what hast thou of greater concernment to do, than to hearken to and obey the voice of Christ? If Christs company be no more worth, and his feasts of no greater value, he may resolve thou shalt not taste of his dainties. His business with thee may be the correcting thy faults, the illuminating thee with spiritual wisdome, warming and spiritualizing thy cold and carnal Affections; to be sure his main business with thee relates to thy spiritual estate, to the concerns of thy soul: And this is of so much greater and nearer import to thee, than any worldly business whatsoever, as thy Soul is of more worth to thee than all the world. For *what will it profit thee to gain the whole world, and loose thy precious, immortal soul?* or *What wilt thou give in exchange for thy soul?* When that is lost by thine earnest pursuit of the world, and neglect of that spiritual work which Christ calls thee to.

3. Christ at his coming into the Soul, sometimes puts his Spouse or People upon some unpleasant work which they would gladly be excused from; and this may be an hindrance to their opening to him. Sometimes he calls to, and puts them upon renewed acts of Repentance (as was hinted before.) Sometimes upon the mortification of some beloved lust, which may be as painful, and as unwillingly yielded to, as the *cutting off the right hand, right foot; or plucking out the right eye.* Nay, his Word may (further) *be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the joynts and marrow, discerning* and discovering *the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. 4. 12. which the Soul is not willing should be discovered, or cut off: or, at least is afraid of the pain and trouble it may be put to in this work; and therefore lingers, and puts off Christ from time to time. Sometimes (again) Christ may put his Spouse upon such duties, as may cross her natural inclination, or particular, present, and visible interest. Such as *denying her self, taking up her cross, following him. Enduring hardship as a good souldier for Christ. Enduring reproaches, evil-speakings, persecutions*, and the like; all which are unpleasing to flesh and blood: And where-

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in the Soul muſt ſay (as to its natural inclination) as our Saviour ſaid when he prayed, *Not my will, but thy will be done.* Here the Soul often ſticks, and upon theſe terms, is loth to open to Chriſt, the fleſh having ſo ſtrong an influence upon the ſoul. Upon ſuch terms as theſe the young man in the Goſpel went away from Chriſt, *Mark.* 10. 21, 22. —— *Go thy way, ſell whatſoever thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven: and come take up thy croſs and follow me. And he was ſad at that ſaying, and went away grieved,* &c. I am afraid there are but too many in this age that would account theſe too hard terms to accept of Chriſt upon.

But if men would but argue rationally, why ſhould theſe be any hindrances to our opening to Chriſt? for in all this Chriſt bids us no loſs. If he bids us part with Earthly, he promiſeth us Heavenly treaſure. If he bids us cut off a corrupt part or member, (though it be painful, yet) it is in order to the eternal ſalvation of the whole, *Matth.* 5. 29, 30. and is it not better to loſe a corrupt part, than loſe the whole?

4. Chriſt at his coming may excite us to, and quicken us in our work; may call us to be quicker, and more exact and curious in our work. He may tell us that our work is great,

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and our time but short. He may bid us *strive* with all our might *to enter in at the straight gate; for many shall,* (in a lazy and sloathful manner) *seek* and wish *to enter in, and shall not be able.* He may tell us, that this lazy sloathful working will not attain the end that we aim at; for *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent* onely *take it by force.* It will not serve our turns to read, pray, hear, meditate, &c. at the cold and careless rate which we do. It will not do well to be such strangers (as we are) to our own hearts; but we must examine our own hearts more deeply, throughly, and effectually: must study and practice our duties more throughly: must *watch unto prayer,* and *give our selves unto prayer: Must make the Law of God our delight and daily meditation: must in all things,* small as well as great, *exercise a Conscience void of offence towards God and Men:* Must set a *watch* before the door of our *Hearts, Lips,* and *lives:* *Must* (in short) *forgetting those things that are behinde, and reaching forward to those things that are before, press towards the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* He may come to ask us such questions as these: What have you been doing since the last time I was with you? what have you learned? what have you practised? what proficiency have

have you made? what account can you give of the Talents which I betrusted you with? in what forwardness is your work? let me see how matters stand with you? what designes have you on foot for my glory? and what are the designes which you are now carrying on? These and such-like questions may be asked by Christ at his coming in. Now if the Soul have been idle and carelesse, and not able in any measure to give a good account in these and such-like cases; no wonder though she be unwilling (at this time) to open to Christ. The fear of having her faults discovered, and the guilt of them to disturb the quiet of her Conscience, will make her very slow in opening to Christ, (as was noted before.)

But if reason might take place, this should be no hinderance at all; for what Christ tells us, is real truth, that our work is great, and *our time but short*, passing on a pace, and irrecoverable when gone: and if we have slept or loitered, is it reason that we should do so still? Is it not *high time to awake out of sleep? the night is far spent, the day is at hand.* If he should let us sleep or loiter on till his last call, to come to the *Wedding*, as he did the foolish Virgins, *Matth.* 25. in what a condition would you be when you should awake, *your*

lamps

lamps gone out, no oyl in your vessels, no neighbour to borrow of, every one having little enough for himself, and you must be forced to go to buy, when you should enter in with him, and by this means you come to be shut out, and loose your whole expectation? Were it not better let in Christ now, and be content to shake off sleep, while you have time to get *oyl into your vessels with your lamps?* We use to say, that delays in most cases are very dangerous; and that it is bad putting off things to the last: I am sure this is most true in this case, that so greatly concerns the eternal state of our Souls. Nay further, if things be amiss in us, is it not better to let Christ come in, and put all things to rights in us, then to let them go at random, till they be past cure? I am sure there never was Soul that ever repented of this, whatever pain it was put to in the doing of it; though many a Soul hath sadly repented the shutting out of Christ, when it hath been too late. It is better that Christ bring thy faults and sin to light and remembrance here, while thou mayst repent and reform; than that thy sin should finde thee out in the guilt, shame, and punishment of it to all eternity hereafter: *And be sure thy sin will*, at one time or other, *finde thee out*, Numb. 32. 23. Oh! therefore let none of these things have influence upon

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you, to hinder you from opening to Christ at his call.

I dare be bold to say, that there can be no true spiritual reason, for any poor soul to refuse to open to Christ; *all reasons* produced for that end are *carnal*, and therefore ought to be pulled down and destroyed; *For the weapons of our warfare are not* (ought not to be) *carnal, but mighty; to the pulling down— all imaginations*; or (as the word signifies) cavils, or carnal reasonings. One of these two causes (doubtless) both which are bad, these carnal reasonings must proceed from; either from a secret love to some sin, or lust in the heart, which we would not have Christ to discover or purge out; which may well call in question the truth and sincerity of Grace in us: for the Psalmist tells us, *Psal.* 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer*: And it is certain, He doth hear the Prayers of such as are sincere; for he saith, *Psal.* 145. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him* —— *in truth.* So that thy sincerity is questionable. Or else it proceeds hence, *viz.* from Pride and Self-love. Pride, because thou wouldest not have Christ to see things amiss in thee: but know, that *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* From Self-love, in that thou so much desirest the ease, and gratification of

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the flesh; Now if thy very *life* be more *dear* to thee than *Christ*, *thou art not worthy to be his disciple.* O let none of these base and sinful arguments keep thee off from opening speedily to Christ at his call.

I might tell thee also of the advantages that will come by opening to Christ, but these I have largely spoken to before, only this one give me leave to mention here; If thou wilt freely open to Christ now, He will readily open to thee at Death and Judgment. There are few but they are convinced of the trouble and restlesness of their present state, and not fully satisfied with the present state they are in, but are still seeking and labouring for something further, in hopes another condition may be better: and this they might gather from all their experiences, that a rest is not to be had here. And consequently all men (in this life) are but in a seeking condition, seeking for rest and can finde none, (as our Saviour speaks in the Parable) they have often something within that suggests, *This is not your resting place*: By dayly experience they also see, that *it is appointed for all men once to die*: And therefore they might conclude, that a rest must be had in another world, or not had at all; for here no rest is to be had. And certain it is, that *There doth remain a rest for the people of God*, and

and to them only; and who are these people of God, but they that open to Christ here? for *all power is committed into the hands of Christ. He it is that hath the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth:* And can we reasonably imagine that he will open to any (at that day) that will not open to him now? No; he tells us quite the contrary, *Prov.* 1. 24, &c. You know the foolish Virgins cryed loud, *Open to us*; but he answered, *I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* If therefore there be any restlessness in this world that thou art weary of, or in Hell that thou art afraid of; or if there be any rest at death and in Heaven desireable, open to Christ now, as ever thou wouldest avoid the one, or desirest to partake of the other. So (that to conclude this Use) if either sense of duty, love to thy self and thine own happiness, the love of God and Christ, or love to God and Christ may have any influence upon thee, if any thing either of Divinity or Humanity may work upon thee, here is fulness of reason and motives to perswade thee to open to Christ; and therefore let reason prevail with thee.

But thou wilt say, How shall I open to Christ? And what would you have me in this case to do? I am willing to open to Christ,

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if I knew but how to do it; and what is required in this case?

That I may help thee a little in this great and necessary work, I shall give thee some directions, how to carry, and what to do, and so shall conclude this subject. And these directions shall be of two sorts. 1. Such as may have respect unto the Heart, and the manner or way of the Hearts opening to Christ. 2. Such as may have respect to Christ, and the several ways of his coming in, and making himself manifest unto the Soul.

I begin with such directions as respect the Heart, and the way and manner of the Hearts opening to Christ. Now that we may the better know how many ways the Heart must be opened to Christ, it may not be impertinent to consider how many ways the Heart may be shut against Christ. Now, it is evident that the Heart may these several ways be shut against Christ. By Pride and self-confidence: by unbelief: by impenitency: by want of Love, or coldness of affection: by sloth and sluggishness either in our watch or work. A little to open each of these, and then you shall see by them, what of the Heart, or in what respects the Heart is to be opened to Christ.

1. The Heart may be shut against Christ by

Pride, and self-confidence. Such is the Pride and haughtiness of corrupted Nature, that though the sinner be justly condemned for his sin, yet he seeks to justifie himself, and would not seem to be beholden to Jesus Christ nor his satisfaction for a pardon. This is evident in our first Parents, in their shifting off their sins, and endeavouring to transmit the guilt upon some one else. *Adam* when examined, rather than he would be found faulty, lays the blame upon *Eve*, and in some sense upon God himself: *The woman which thou gavest me, gave me, &c. and I did eat.* The woman, when examined, lays the guilt upon the Serpent: *The Serpent beguiled me, &c.* And the same principle of Pride remains in some measure in the Hearts of all *Adam's* Posterity, which makes them use their utmost endeavour to justifie themselves. This is the true cause of all excuses that are made for sin, and the reason why persons do so over-much value their own works of Righteousness, judging (in effect) that every small parcel of duty and obedience is sufficient to expiate the greatest sin. And by this means Jesus Christ is undervalued, and little set by: for a man will never be wholly beholden to Jesus Christ for his justification, while he hath any Righteousness of his own to lean to.

And by this means the Heart is shut against Christ. As this Pride hardens God's heart against the sinner, and makes God to resist, or set himself in battle-array against the sinner, (as the word signifies) *James* 4. 6. and as this self-justifying confidence causeth Christ (many times) to pass by the door of such a sinner without calling upon him; for he tells us, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matth. 9. 13. that is, those that are (through Pride and self-confidence) righteous in their own eyes: So this Pride doth harden and shut the heart of the sinner against God and Christ. And therefore the Psalmist saith, *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God.* Psal. 10. 4. This therefore must be removed out of the way, before the door of the Heart be truly and fully opened to Christ. Wouldest thou therefore open to Christ, get rid of all Pride and self-confidence: labour to be humble, low, and vile in thine own eyes; and to such Christ will look, Isai. 66. 2. *To this man will I look, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.* And elsewhere, *The poor have the Gospel preached to them.* i. e. They that are of a poor, humble, self-denying spirit, have the glad tidings of Salvation brought unto them: to these *the Son of Righteousness* arises

ariseth with healing under his wings. And therefore *blessed are these poor in spirit, for they shall see God.* While *David* justified himself and hid his sin, the hand of God was heavy upon him: but when he humbled himself and confessed freely his sin, God came in with pardon, *Psal.* 32. Oh therefore labour after humility and lowness of spirit; for *God resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble your selves* therefore, *and* in due time *God will exalt you* with his presence and company. Christ must do all, and have the glory, as well as the command of all, where he comes: and therefore he is fit company for none but those that are humble, self-denying, self-condemning sinners.

2. The Heart is many times shut against Christ by unbelief. Faith is the hand whereby Christ is received: Faith must open the door to Christ; and therefore where Faith is wanting, the door of the Heart must needs be kept shut against Christ. Unbelief is one of the great Bars or Bolts, whereby the Heart is kept fast shut against Christ. This Bar therefore must be removed, before the Heart can be opened to Christ. The Apostle tells us the reason why the Jews were rejected, was *because of their unbelief.* Unbelief is the great Gospel-sin, the Rock upon which many a poor soul is split.

plit. Therefore saith our Saviour, *John* 3. 18. *He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* Beware therefore of unbelief, and open to him by Faith. Christ gives many invitations and calls, such as you read *Isai.* 55. 1. &c. Believe therefore that Christ is really willing to receive those that he makes such calls unto; and of those number thou art, if thou dost not wilfully exclude thy self through unbelief. He makes many gracious promises of Pardon of Sin, of Adoption, Sanctification, and Life Eternal: and withal he tells thee upon what terms and conditions these things are to be had. Therefore by Faith embrace these Promises, apply them to thy self, thankfully close with them, and labour to answer the terms and conditions of them; and if thou dost but on thy part manifest thy real willingness, thou shalt finde that he will come in unto thee with comfort and assurance. Therefore open to Christ by Faith: believe his word: embrace his promises: obey his commands: dread his threatnings: give up thy self by covenant unto him, *that he may be made of God unto thee wisdom righteousness sanctification, and redemption.*

3. Sometimes the heart is shut against Christ by impenitency. It is an opinion but too com-

common and ordinary among Sinners, that Repentance is only needful in some few grosse cases, for some great and notorious enormity; but as for sins of a less magnitude, they look upon them as pardoned in course, without any considerable repentance. And therefore if they finde not themselves guilty of such great sins, they conceit that they need no Repentance. In this sense are those words of our Saviour to be understood, Luke 15. 7. *Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance*; *i. e.* that think they need no repentance: and this is the secret thought but of too many in the world, and by this they shut out the Lord Jesus Christ, as a person that they have no great need of, or occasion for; they think themselves whole, and therefore see no need of a Physician. But he that would have Christ to come into his soul, must see a need of Christ, must see himself to be a sinner, a great sinner, lost and undone without Christ, must see himself an enemy to God by nature, a rebel and traitor; and this his enmity he must repent of, be heartily sorry for, must be really willing and desirous of peace and reconciliation with God, must abhor himself for his former comity, and resolve (through the Grace of God) that he will stand no longer in

opposition to God, but must come with an humble, broken, melted heart to God, begging pardon for what is by-past, and deliberately resolving and promising new and faithful obedience for time to come; and this he must do from a sense of the sinful and cursed nature of sin. And upon this Repentance it is that Christ comes in, and is willing to be a Media or between God and man. And therefore if thou wouldest open to Christ aright, set thy self seriously to the work of Repentance, perform that work throughly, let no known sin, or sin that thou canst possibly discover in thy self, pass unrepented of. Go therefore into secret, examine thine own heart, what sins thou canst finde lodged there, meditate upon them, with all the aggravating circumstances of them, and dwell so long upon the thoughts of them, till such time as thou hast brought thine heart to an utter loathing and abhorrence of them, and of thy self for committing of them, and allowing thy self in them; and till thou comest to judge and condemn thy self as worthy of eternal damnation, for hearkening to the temptation of them. And then let God hear thee bemoan thy self, and complaining of thine own folly and wickedness, and what a sad and wretched condition thou hast brought thy self into by thy sins;

and beg help of God to turn thee, and bring thee unto Jesus Christ, and bestow him upon thee; and when this is done sincerely and faithfully, thou shalt finde Christ ready to come in unto thy soul. See this exemplified in *Ephraims* repentance, *Jer.* 31. 18, 19, 20. *Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. After I was turned, I repented; after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant Child? For ever since I spake against him, I earnestly remember him still: therefore I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* *Ephraim* by repentance opened his heart to God, and then Gods heart was open towards him, and Gods bowels yearn towards him. Thus do thou *humble thyself* to God, and *in due time he will exalt thee.* Open thine heart by Repentance, and thou wilt be in fee for the reception of Jesus Christ.

4. Sometimes the heart may be shut against Christ by decay or want of Love. It is want of due love and respect to Christ, that is the cause why he is shut out of the Soul: did we love Christ more, we should more readily open

unto Christ; and did we more really and fervently love him, we should have more of his company. If Love be wanting, Christ cares not to come in that Soul: neither indeed will there be convenient room for Christ in that Soul. If thy love to Christ be cold, thy heart will be shut against him: for the Heart is naturally contracted and shut where love is wanting: and it is the very nature of Love to open, expand, or enlarge the Heart towards the object beloved. If therefore thou wouldest have Christ to come into thy Soul, set Love to work. Love will make Christ precious and desirable to thy Soul, and thereupon set thee a longing for Christ when he is absent. Love will enlarge thy desire, and make thee impatient of his absence, and spur thee on to a more diligent seeking of him. Love will bid Christ welcome at his coming, and therefore will endeavour not onely to remove whatever may be offensive and distasteful to him, but to have all things in a readiness and preparedness for his entertainment. Nay, Love makes the Soul to think no time lost in his company, nor any cost too great for his entertainment. And therefore if Love have been cold or wanting towards Christ, let it be so no more; but labour to get and maintain more fervent love to Christ, and this will be

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the ready way to have his company: For Love will make thee to hunger after Christ; and he hath promised *to satisfie the hungry soul.* We read *Rev.* 2. that God threatens *Ephesus*, that he will depart, and *remove his Golden Candlestick from the midst of her*, because of her decay in her *Love* towards him: she had lost *her first love.* And well he might; for the less she loved him, the more was her Heart contracted and shut against him; and therefore little room could he have in her Heart, and consequently little heart to stay there. Take heed therefore of suffering thy love to Christ to decay, if thou hast any mind of his company: but get thine heart filled with love to Christ, and then the door of thine Heart will be open to him, and he may have ready and welcome entertainment when he comes.

5. The door of the Heart may be shut against Christ by negligence and sloth. Now there is a two-fold negligence which Christians are subject unto. 1. A negligence or sluggishness in their work. Or 2. in their Watch: by the means of both which Jesus Christ may be shut out of the Heart.

1. Jesus Christ may be shut out by our negligence and sluggishness in our work. Slothful working and labouring in our spiritual calling, doth but keep Christ out of the Soul.

When

When a man prays after a sluggish and slothful manner, he doth in effect say, that he matters not Christ's company; and therefore he cannot expect to finde him. *For Christ will be found of those that diligently seek him.* A slothful man will scarcely be willing to wait in the way of duty till Christ come; but, like the Spouse in the Text, will have laid aside his work, and be gone to bed when Christ calls, and too lazy too to arise to open to him. Some persons indeed are impatient of Christ's delays, because of their earnest desire of his company, they are *sick of love*: to these Christ *will come, and will not tarry.* Others are impatient under delays, because they are weary of duty, love not to tug, and toil, and sweat in duty too long, but would have Christ come that their work might be over; and if he come not in their time, they leave off their work: these do shut out Christ. Wouldest thou therefore have thy heart open to Christ, be not slothful or sluggish in duty, but be diligent, painful, and industrious in thy spiritual work. Be diligent in mortifying sin, in quickning grace, in discharging duties, and those of all sorts: that so *when Christ comes, he may finde thee so doing*, busily employed in thy Lords work; and then will he say to thee, *Well done good and faithful servant.*

2. Je-

2. Jesus Christ may be shut out by our negligence and sluggishness in our watch. The Spouse here had laid aside her watch, was composing her self for rest, and now Christ at his coming found her door shut. When Sinners grow lazy, and let fall their watch, they are in a fitter posture for Satan to finde them than Christ: For *Satan goes about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour*: and therefore his fittest opportunity is when he can finde them napping and secure. But Christ comes as a friend, and therefore would finde us watching: he comes as a Master, and therefore expects us to be ready to open to him.

If therefore thou wouldest have thine heart open to Christ, keep a constant watch over thy self: *watch and pray, that thou enter not into temptation*: Watch against the treachery, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of thine own heart. Watch against the insinuations of an enticing alluring world. Watch against the motions and suggestions of a malicious and subtile Devil. Watch thy corruptions, that they prevail not in thee. Watch thy graces, that they neither decay nor be idle. Watch thy Faith, that that may be ready to apprehend and embrace Christ at his coming. And watch thy Patience, that that wear not out, but endure to the end. And watch thy

Love,

Love, that by the decays and coolings of that, thy Heart be not contracted and ſhut againſt Chriſt. Keep up an univerſal, conſtant, and faithful watch, if thou wouldeſt have the door of thine Heart open when Chriſt comes. Bleſſed is he whom his Lord when he comes ſhall find upon his Watch-tower, ready to open to him.

Thus have I ſhewed in what reſpects the Heart may be ſhut againſt Chriſt, and conſequently, by directing you to the removal of them, and the exerciſe of the contrary grace, have inſtructed you how to get and keep the Heart open for Chriſt. To all which, I only adde this one thing more.

Wouldeſt thou have thine Heart open and in a readineſs to entertain Jeſus Chriſt at his coming? then live always in expectation of his coming, look for his coming: when the Servant thinks with himſelf, *My Lord delays his coming*, he will not come yet, he grows idle and careleſs, and neglects both his work and his watch: But if we would but thus judge, Our Lord and Maſter will come, and I know not at what hour of the day, or watch of the night: this would be a means to make us always to keep our Hearts open, and in a readineſs to receive Jeſus Chriſt at his coming: whereas the want of this makes us ſuffer our Faith to decay, our Love to cool, and our Hearts to be ſhut and contracted againſt Chriſt at his coming.

And

And these are the the Directions which I intended to speak to, with respect unto our hearts.

2. I have some directions to give thee with reference to Christ, and the several ways of his coming into the Soul.

1. Wouldest thou have thy heart open to Christ aright, then open thine heart to the knowledge of Christ. The directions which here I give, is the advice and councel of Christ himself, called by the name of *Wisdom*, Prov. 1. 20, 21, 22, 23. *Wisdom cryeth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets — How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? — and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, and will make known my words unto you.* The want of the right knowledge of Christ, is the great reason or ground why the heart is kept so close shut against Christ. You know, that one way of opening to Christ (which I told you of) was by faith, rolling and recumbing upon Christ; and the Psalmist tells us, *They that know his Name, will put their trust in him*, Psal. 9. 10. and the reason rendered is, because by knowing him they come to understand his truth and faithfulness, that he never *forsakes* the *that diligently seek him.* It is our ignorance of the excellency, all-sufficiency, and suitable-

suitableness of Christ to our insufficiency and emptiness, that makes our love to Christ so very cold. For the proper object of Love is some suitable, desireable good thing. Were we better acquainted then with that fulness that is in Christ, we should more fully and freely open our hearts to Christ. Did we but see his loveliness in every respect, the loveliness of his person, the loveliness of his disposition and qualifications, the loveliness of his works and undertakings, and his suitableness every way to our condition, we should from the inward sense of love in our own souls, cry out with the Spouse, *He is altogether lovely.* Nay, our love towards him, and desire after him, would be so fervent, that we should say with the Spouse, *Tell him that I am sick of love.* If therefore thou wouldest have thine heart more open to Christ, study Christ better; for he hath said, he will exalt, or *set on high* such as *know his Name*, and set their love upon him, *Psal.* 91. 14. And how can he more highly advance thee, than by honouring thee with his company? Our ignorance of Christ makes us that we do not understand his voice when he calls, and therefore we give no heed to his calls.

2. Open thine heart to the commands of Christ; search the Scriptures, to know what it

it is that he requires of thee: and as he teaches thee by his Word and Spirit, let thine heart be open to attend thereunto, as the heart of *Lydia* was, who *attended to the things that were spoken by Paul*. Yea, let thine heart *burn within thee*, while he is talking with thee, as the hearts of the Disciples going to *Emaus* did, while Christ talked with them. Attend diligently to the Ordinances of Christ, and come with the *everlasting doors* of thine heart open, ready prepared to receive whatsoever divine truth God shall make known unto thee, and resolving to practise what truths thou shalt receive; let thine heart be ready to say, when thou comest to every Ordinance, as *Samuel* did, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*; or as *Paul*, *Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?* Or as the people to *Moses*, (but with a better heart, and more stedfast resolution) *All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient.* Open thine heart to the commands of Christ, and let *none of his commands be grievous*, but say with *David*, *O how love I thy Law! it is my meditation day and night.* Remember that Christ is thy Lord and Husband; it is his work to command thee, and it is thy duty in all things to obey, and therefore *take his yoke upon thee* —— *for his yoke is easie, and his burden light*; and, *in keeping his commands there is great reward.*

3. Open

3. Open thine heart to the counsels and advice of Christ; thou maist assure thy self, that Christ will advise thee to nothing but for thy good. See what counsel Christ gives to the *Asian* Churches, Rev. 2, 3. *chap.* his counsel was very suitable to the several states and conditions of every Church. To instance in that of *Laodicea*, she was a very luke-warm Church, and yet very proud, self-confident Church; she said, *She was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; but knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* And what was Christs counsel to her? *I counsel thee to buy of me Gold tryed in the fire, that thou maist be rich, and white raiment that thou maist be cloathed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou maist see,* Rev. 3. 17, 18. Jesus Christ is a most faithful Friend and Physician, will certainly give very seasonable counsel and advice: he is called the *wonderful Counsellor*, Isai. 9. 6. Open thine heart, and listen to the counsel which Christ gives to thee; he will instruct thee how to mortifie thy sins; he will teach thee how to improve Ordinances, to perform Duties, to exercise thy graces; he will teach thee in all respects *to order thy conversation aright*, and to improve all the Dispensations of his Providence towards thee.

Take

Take but Christs counsel and advice, and thou canst never do amiss: for he is wise in heart, and communicative of his wisdome, never fails any that trust and seek to him for counsel and advice: Read *James* 1.5. *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth no man, and it shall be given to him.* But know this, that Christ cannot endure to have his counsel slighted; to do this would highly displease him. Read *Prov.* 1. 24, &c. *I called — but ye would have none of my counsels Therefore I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes — Then shall they call, but I will not answer — for that they hated knowledge — they would none of my counsels — Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* If thou wilt not open to Christ's counsels, thou mayest follow thine own devices, and see what will be the end of it, *Psal.* 81. 11, 12. write out the Text.

4. Open thine Heart to the rebukes and chastisements of Christ. Be not too wise in thine own conceit, as to think that Christ can finde no fault with thee: But as *David* speaks concerning the Righteous, so do thou from thy very heart say, *Let the Righteous, Christ, smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me,*

shall be an excellent oyl, which shall not break my head. Though thou knoweſt before hand that he will finde fault with thee at his coming, yet be never the more afraid to let him in, nor be thou weary of his rebukes. It is unpleaſant diſcourſe (many times) when our Friends rip up our faults, and tell us of them; but it is really our fault ſo to account it: for it is the real part of a Friend to *reprove us, and not to ſuffer ſin upon our ſouls.* However it may be unpleaſant, yet it is both neceſſary and ſafe. It argues a more than ordinary love of Chriſt towards thee, if he deal thus faithfully with thee: for *whom he loves he rebukes and chaſtens,* Rev. 3. 19. Let thy Heart therefore be open, ready, and willing to receive and embrace his moſt ſevere rebukes: And take it as a kindneſs from him that he will rebuke thee; for it is a piece of bleſſedneſs. *Bleſſed is the man whom the Lord rebukes and chaſtens, and teacheth him out of his Law,* Pſal. 94. 12. *David* having found the benefit of this, ſaith, *Pſal.* 119. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgements are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me.* And *v.* 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted* &c. And the Apoſtle tells us, that though *no affliction be for the preſent joyous but greivous, yet afterwards it works the peaceable fruits of Righteouſneſs in*

them

them that are exercised thereby. Heb. 12. 11. open therefore thy Heart to the rebukes of Christ, and willingly receive them.

5. Open to the comforts of Christ. We read that when Christ came to his Disciples when they were met together, his first salutation which he gave them was, *Peace be unto you*, Luke 24. 36. And truely where Christ comes into the Soul, he brings true inward spiritual peace along with him, and freely bestows it upon his Spouse. But yet, such is the proneness of our natures to unbelief, that we many times refuse the comforts which Christ brings, and do not apply them to our selves. Sinners indeed do many times snatch presumptuously at these comforts, which do not of right belong unto them; nor indeed are they offered by Christ to them. But the People of God sometimes, through a foolish and sinful modesty refuse, or at least are afraid to take and apply those comforts which Christ at his coming brings with him; insomuch that Christ is forced to invite, and entreat them to accept of them, as his free gifts which he is really willing and desirous to bestow upon them. This is really a fault in penitent sinners; for Christs real design in coming, is to give that which may be the surest and best ground of everlasting peace and comfort

to the Soul. If he convince of and reprove for ſin, and thereby cauſe ſorrow and ſadneſs in the Soul, this ſearching is but in order to the healing of their wound, that they may afterwards have more ſolid peace and comfort. If he frown, it is but to make his ſmiles the more pleaſant, and make us to prize them the more. If he call us to, and put us upon more difficult, and (to the fleſh) unpleaſant work, it is but that thereby he may honour us the more, and his comfortable preſence ſhall be with us in it. If he caſt us down for a time, he will be careful that we be not overwhelmed with too much ſorrow, and will in due time lift us up: refuſe not therefore his comforts which are the deſigne of all his carriage towards thee whatever Chriſt doth, and however he may ſeem to carry towards thee; the ultimate end of all is to do thee good, and comfort thee; and therefore hath promiſed, *Rom.* 8. 28. *That all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.*

6. Open to the love of Chriſt. I did perſwade you before to open and enlarge your Hearts in love towards Chriſt. But now I adviſe you to open your hearts to receive his love. When Chriſt comes and manifeſts real tokens and demonſtrations of his diſtinguiſhing everlaſting love, do not you deſpiſe or reject theſe.

It

It is an hard matter to convince and perſwade ſome Chriſtians that Chriſt loves them, or at leaſt that his love is real and diſtinguiſhing, ſuch as he bears to his own children or Spouſe. They will eaſily grant that they love him, but cannot ſo eaſily believe that he loves them. But I would ask ſuch a Soul this queſtion: How cameſt thou thus to love Chriſt? If thy love be real, it is onely a reflex beam of Chriſt his love to thee; he muſt neceſſarily love thee before thou canſt love him: For certainly there was a time when thou didſt hate, as all unregenerate perſons do; and who made thee then to differ either from others, or from what thou thy ſelf once was? It can be nothing elſe but his love ſhed abroad in thy Heart. This is the argument pleaded, *Ezek.* 16. 1. to the 15 v. Love is an affection not to be forced, but to be drawn, as is intimated, *Cant.* 8. 7. *If a man would give all the ſubſtance of his houſe for love, it would utterly be contemned.* And it muſt be drawn by the diſcovery of ſome ſuitable and deſirable excellency in the object beloved, that may anſwer the need or deſire of the Soul that loveth. The Soul finding it ſelf empty or void of ſomething that might tend to the compleating of its happineſs (for happineſs conſiſts in the fulneſs of the Soul when it wants nothing; while it wants any thing it is

not

not compleatly happy) upon this diſcovery of emptineſs in it ſelf, ſeeks out where ſuch a thing may be had; and finding Jeſus Chriſt to be that all-ſufficient object which may every way anſwer the need and emptineſs of the ſoul, loves him, with a love of deſire and earneſt longing after him, as the onely perſon, the enjoyment of whom can make her abſolutely and perfectly happy. And ſo far as ſhe can enjoy him, ſo far ſhe is delighted and ſatisfied with him. This is the true notion of love, and if thy love to Chriſt be right, it is ſuch a love as this.

If therefore upon the diſcovery of Chriſts excellency and perfection, anſwerable to thine indigence and emptineſs, thy ſoul doth truely love Chriſt. I would gladly know, who diſcovered to thee this perfection and ſuitableneſs in Chriſt? (who is ſo generally deſpiſed in the world). And who drew out thy heart in love to Chriſt, upon this account? Surely it muſt, it can be none but Chriſt, and if he thus *with loving kindneſs have drawn thee*, certainly it is becauſe *he hath loved thee with an everlaſting love*, Jer. 31. 3. Thou haſt leſs reaſon therefore to queſtion the real love of Chriſt to thee, than to queſtion the reality of thy love to him? Open therefore thy heart freely to the love of Chriſt, and inſtead of queſtioning

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the reality of Christs love to thee, rather study how thou maist by returns of love and thankful obedience answer so great love as he hath manifested towards thee. Study to improve and highly prize his love; for he first loved thee, or else thou couldest not have loved him at all.

7. And lastly, Open to the company and presence of Christ: If Christ come to thy door, and would come in and afford thee his company, in any Ordinance, or by any Providence, whether in publick, private, or secret: Open to him, let him in, let him have thy company, let him see all the parts of thine heart, hide nothing from him, deal as *Hezekiah* did with the *Babylonish* Embassadors, shewed them all that was in his house, hid nothing from them; So deal thou by Christ: fully unbosome thy self to him, improve thy time with him, and interest in him to the best advantage, reveal to him thy secrets, confess to him thy sins, acquaint him with thy wants, seek counsel and advice from him in all thy difficulties, strength in all thy weaknesses, support under all thy burdens, victory in all thy temptations, comfort in all thine adversities, a sanctified use of and a seasonable deliverance out of all thy troubles. Beg to be guided by his counsel here, the continuance of

of his presence with thee always even to the end, and thy safe reception and conduct unto glory. And if thou thus open to Christ, earnestly desiring and being freely willing that he should work all thy works in thee and for thee, he *will come in unto thee, and will sup with thee, and thou with him*. Will feast thee with his Graces here, and will crown all thy grace with Glory hereafter.

FINIS.